

CHAUDHRY ON HOUSEWIFERY • MIKE DAVIS ON SLUMS • PLUS:

MAY 2006

IN THESE TIMES



KEEPING AMERICA EMPTY

HOW ONE SMALL-TOWN
CONSERVATIONIST LAUNCHED TODAY'S
ANTI-IMMIGRATION MOVEMENT

CHRISTOPHER HAYES REPORTS



Chronology universally taken for granted is wrong

- All methods of dating of ancient sources and artefacts are **erroneous**;
- Ancient Rome, Greece and Egypt can be reliably dated to **X-XIII** cy A.D.;
- Jesus Christ may have been born in 1053 and crucified in 1086 A.D. in **Rome(a)**;
- The Apocalypse was written on the Isle of Patmos **after** the 1st October 1486 A.D.;
- The Old Testament was compiled **after** The New Testament as a rendition of mediaeval events.

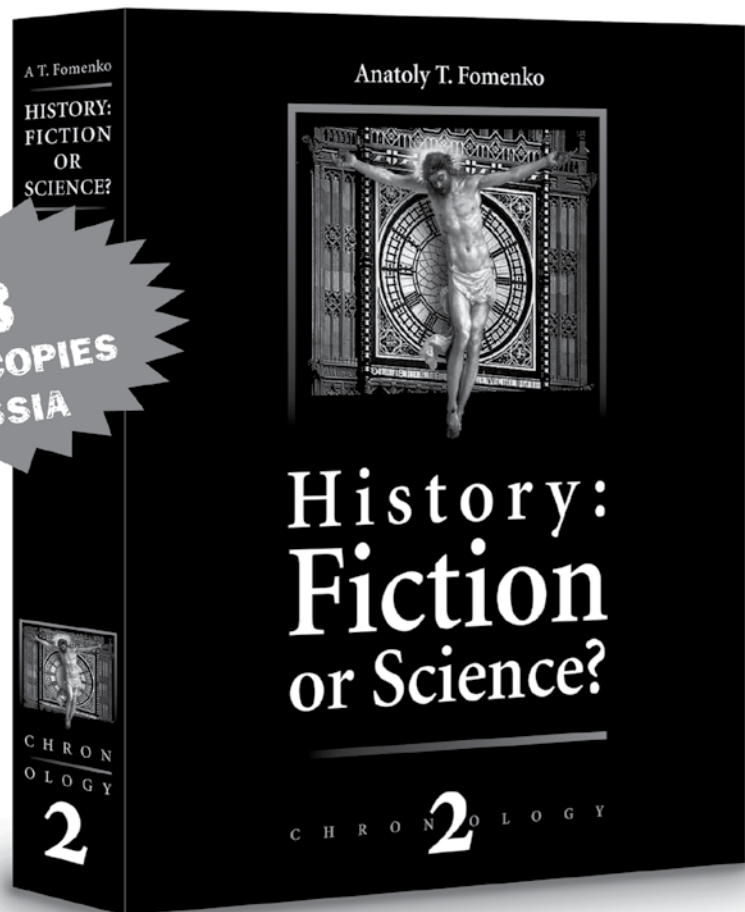
Henry Ford said: "**History is bunk.**"

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Basically, this is the first successful attempt to finally transform history into a science.

This book is a must read for everyone who isn't entirely indifferent to human history, and possibly also for those who are.

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The Seinfeld Strategy

FOR THE FIRST TIME in more than a decade, Democrats seem to have a shot at taking back Congress. But also for the first time in recent history, Congress is on the cusp of switching hands without a voter mandate. How is that possible? Because Democrats are only in the hunt thanks to gross Republican missteps—and they are going out of their way to make sure their potential election to the majority is about nothing. Call it the Seinfeld strategy.

Los Angeles Times columnist Ron Brownstein reports, “Democratic leaders are drifting toward a midterm message that indicts Bush more on grounds of competence (on issues such as Iraq, Hurricane Katrina and prescription drugs) than ideology.”

As a short-term electoral tactic, the Seinfeldian “competence” strategy allows the GOP to right itself with new management. Sadly, it is not a strategy based on ideological differences that puts a boot to conservatives’ neck when their hypocrisy trips them up and they fall down. Thus, while Democrats celebrate the resignations of people like Reps. Tom DeLay (Texas) and Duke Cunningham (Calif.), the GOP simultaneously celebrates because they can now counter the Democrats’ “competence” argument by pointing out that their party has sloughed off the incompetents. In short, the Republican Party and the right’s ideological agenda march forward, largely unscathed.

In making such a limited critique, Democrats tacitly validate conservatives’ ideological goals and further reinforce the public feeling that Democrats have no convictions of their own. For example, despite the GOP scandals and the political opportunities they present, Democrats refuse to push serious reforms like public financing of elections and instead push half-measures and focus on Republican missteps.

In the process, they are implicitly saying they believe the system that most Americans know is corrupt is actually perfectly acceptable. The same thing on

Iraq: The Democratic Party refuses to take a position wholly different from the Republicans, simply saying the management of the war—rather than the war itself—is the problem.

National Democratic leaders will say they are forced to use the “competence” argument because it is the one big theme that unifies their ideologically diverse congressional membership. But that hides the not-so-secret fact that very powerful, very vocal, and very ideological forces within the Democratic Party support many of the conservative goals that a “competence” strategy inherently validates.

On domestic policy, these forces went public in April at a press conference at the Brookings Institution. Led by Citigroup chairman Robert Rubin—Clinton’s former Treasury secretary—the “Hamilton Project” announced plans to “take on entrenched Democratic interests” such as teachers’ unions. According to the *Financial Times*, a policy paper handed out at the event used words like “protectionist” to describe courageous congressional Democrats fighting to reform the corporate-written trade pacts Rubin and others helped pass in the ’90s. It also advocated school “vouchers” and “entitlement reform”—code words for defunding public education and eviscerating bedrock Democratic programs like Social Security and Medicare. At least they were honest in naming themselves after Alexander Hamilton, the leader of the elitist Federalist Party and rival of Thomas Jefferson, the populist founder of the Democratic Party.

Public opinion data consistently show Americans are desperate for political leaders who will represent ordinary citizens’ interests—not just powerful lobbyists and their wealthy corporate clients.

Until Democrats decide to stop taking part in “business as usual” and start fighting back against the right wing’s ideology, they will face the same political liabilities they do today.

—David Sirota

IN THESE TIMES

“With liberty and justice for all...”

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mixed reaction

QUID PRO QUO

THE QUID:

Rep. Gary Miller (R-Calif.) goes way back with Richard Lewis, an executive at Lewis Operating Corp., a real estate development firm. "I've known Richard Lewis for 30 years," Rep. Miller told *The Hill* on March 30. "Richard's son and my daughter went to high school together." The relationship might explain why Lewis Operating and its employees have donated \$19,300 to Miller's campaign committees since 1998, as well as why Miller's No. 1 campaign contributor since his election to office has been the National Association of Home Builders—of which Lewis Operating is a member.

THE QUO:

It might also explain why Miller pushed for a provision in last year's transportation bill that allowed the city of Rialto, Calif., to shut down its airport, despite the fact that the Federal Aviation Administration, which normally handles such matters, wanted the airport to remain open. The decision to close the airport allowed Lewis Operating to buy the land from the city so they could build "Renaissance," a planned community of homes, parks and retail stores.

“ Anger has a very important spiritual benefit. If you don't have anger, you end up tolerating the intolerable—and that's intolerable. ”

WILLIAM SLOANE COFFIN, JR. (1924-2006)

LABANARAMA BY TERRY LABAN



the lexicon

reconquista: n. Spanish for 'reconquest.'

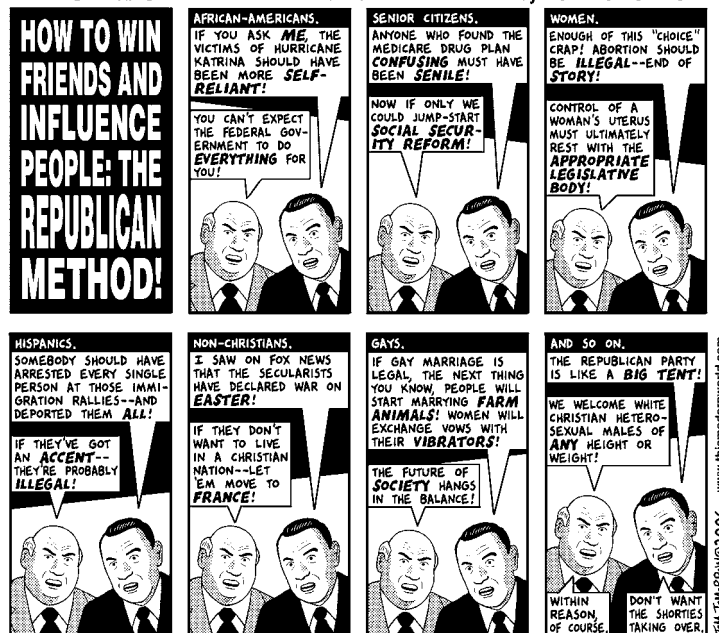
CURRENT USAGE: Within anti-immigration circles, refers to an alleged plot by the Mexican government to use mass immigration to "reconquer" those portions of the southwestern United States that once belonged to Mexico.

Though generally confined to the more paranoid corners of the anti-immigration movement, the idea recently received a mainstream endorsement from *Slate* blogger Mickey Kaus. "True, the fabled 'reconquista' is hardly a real threat now," he wrote. "But who can guarantee what future generations will think?"

Future *reconquistadores* could not be reached for comment.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



letters



What About Fidel?

Nadia Martinez is to be thanked for an informative survey of the social and economic changes being witnessed in the Americas ("Political Upheaval," April). Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia, Otton Solís in Costa Rica, "Lula" da Silva in Brazil, Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay, Michelle Bachelet in Chile, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (and even Vicente Fox) in Mexico, Néstor Kirchner in Argentina, Roosevelt Skerit in the Dominican Republic. These leaders are at the helm of a rising peoples' movement in South and Latin America. And they all have one thing in common, which Martinez only mentions in passing: An exchange visit one way or another with the most dynamic international figure in his generation—Cuban president Fidel Castro. What is happening in Cuba—despite the legacy of the Batista regime, its Third World status and the harshness of the illegal U.S. blockade—is a marvel that is coming to be recognized as such in world history. Fidel's sense of social

and economic justice and his charisma rub off from the briefest of encounters. A myriad of examples abound. Suddenly, it seems, education and healthcare, his two basics for any peoples' uprising to succeed, take center stage as those countries are trying to rise from their own depths of colonialism and its resultant poverty.

All of those nations mentioned, with their oil, tin, copper and other vital natural resources, are collectively becoming a major factor on the world scene. The Americas, taking a page from the wonderment that is Castro's leadership, are taking their place, not as exploited colonial powers, but sovereign nations in their own right.

Because of this reality, we are now aware of the reason why U.S. foreign policy for almost half a century has had such a penchant to destroy Fidel and his revolution. We were assuming a mythical military threat from Cuba. Now we have come to know better. Karl Marx's opening sentences of his Manifesto that a specter was haunting Europe, the specter of communism, are ringing true. You just have to adjust for the geography.

Don Sloan
New York

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Sloan is right. Cuba under Castro has made great gains in the fields of health care and education. However, that doesn't alter the fact that Castro's Cuba is a police state that denies freedom of speech and other basic civil liberties to its citizens.

Mammon's Lures

Once again, David Sirota hit the nail on the head with "A Primary Concern" (April). The majority of our Democratic leaders fit the conservative profile not because they are religious, fearful and authoritarian, but because they are rich. With few notable exceptions, the most conservative are those with the most to conserve. Not only Republicans, but Democratic politicians as well, enjoy the perks, the limelight, the ass kissing and the high life provided by their plutocratic backers. They learn quickly which side their bread is buttered on. Politicians may go in with the best intentions, but the temptations and material rewards are so great that sooner or later they will join the disciples of that great father of conservatism, Mammon. At least the Republicans are up front about and even proud of their conservative allegiances.

We seldom if ever hear a Democratic politician proudly describe him or herself as a liberal. Or say that liberals are responsible for most of the social progress in the world, or even refer to Jesus as being the most vivid example of a liberal. However, the opposite of liberal is not the nice-sounding "conservative," but "authoritarian." It is incorrect to refer to the berserkers in power as conservatives, as one would refer to sweet little old ladies. They are reactionary, murdering, money-grubbing, raping, stealing, polluting, bankrupting, child-molesting, cowardly

authoritarians. Wealth and power make pro-Iraq War, pro-Drug War, Corporate-conservative Democrats inevitable. One country has been able to avoid this problem. It has the highest per capita income in the world despite few natural resources, no wars for 150 years though surrounded by warring nations, little crime and unemployment and no boom-and-bust economy. That country is Switzerland. With the help of modern communications, someday we may also be able to do without professional politicians all together.

Ren Giovanni
Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

A Fitting Tribute

As a citizen who lived the '60s and spent time in Chicago and Milwaukee seeing the good the Panthers did, I think Salim Muwakkil's "The Battle for Fred Hampton Way" (April) is a fitting tribute and overdue! I also think anyone seeing the excellent documentary *The Murder of Fred Hampton* could not see his death as anything but federal- and state-sanctioned murder. I would like to see this movie in wider distribution, but I also think all the policemen involved should have been indicted as well as the arrogant Edward V. Hanrahan. I would prefer to see a street named for a people's hero and spokesman rather than some dead rich white man.

Sandra Endlich-Saul
Madison, Wis.

Dear Readers:

On April 20, *In These Times* kicked off the first of a series of Spring events with "Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal," featuring Studs Terkel and author Anthony Arrove.

UPCOMING EVENTS INCLUDE:

A critical dialogue on the state of the left between Slavoj Žižek, *In These Times* contributing editor, and Danny Postel, senior editor of *openDemocracy* (www.opendemocracy.net) magazine.

WHEN: April 26, 7 p.m.

WHERE: *In These Times*' offices

COST: \$5

The fifth annual peace walk sponsored by the Committee for a Just Peace in Israel and Palestine. An "advocacy buffet" will follow at 3 p.m. Scheduled speakers include: Ali Abunimah, Phyllis Bennis, Ronnie Gilbert and Danny Glover. For more information, visit www.cjpip.org.

WHEN: May 7, 1 p.m.

WHERE: Scoville Park, Corner of Lake St. and Oak Park Ave. in Oak Park, Illinois.

In These Times Senior Editor David Sirota launches his new book *Hostile Takeover: How Big Money & Corruption Conquered Our Government*. Sirota will be joined by Rick Perlstein and Tom Geoghegan.

WHEN: May 16, 7 p.m.

WHERE: *In These Times*' offices

Contact Erin Polgreen at erin@inthesetimes.com for more information.

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Don't miss our exclusive Web-only stories:

Mikhaela Reid interviews cartoonist Stephanie McMillan, whose cartoon mocking South Dakota State Sen. Bill Napoli was auctioned off on eBay for more than \$2,000 to benefit Planned Parenthood and the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

Elizabeth Weill-Greenberg writes about being recruited by the U.S. military, in an essay adapted from the forthcoming *10 Excellent Reasons Not to Join the Military*.

Silja J.A. Talvi considers "immersion journalism" through the lens of two recent books on the criminal justice system, Steve Bogira's *Courtroom 302* and Sasha Abramsky's *Conned*.



FIRE ON THE PRAIRIE

a radio forum sponsored by *In These Times*

Hear an excerpt of a talk given by Dr. Rashad Zidan, Iraqi pharmacist and co-founder of the Women and Knowledge Society. Dr. Rashad recently toured the United States as part of an "Iraqi Women Say No to War."

Also hear audio of Brian Cook's interview with Mike Davis (see p. 36), author of the new book *Planet of Slums*.

Finally, we broadcast the second installment from a speech delivered by Dr. Cornel West as part of the University of Chicago's Organization of Black Students George E. Kent lecture series.

To hear the show visit: fireontheprairie.com

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Undercover Cover-Up

Was a Portland attorney the target of the NSA domestic spying program?

BY KRISTIAN WILLIAMS

THOMAS NELSON KNEW SOMEONE had been going through his north-east Portland law office. He didn't know who, or why, but several times—from January to July 2005—he noticed that papers on his desk had been moved and his computer rebooted. Yet, he says, “as far as I [could] tell, nothing was taken.”

Then he got an e-mail from Jon Norling, another lawyer in the same suite, alerting him that twice on a previous night someone posing as a member of the cleaning crew had tried to enter the office. “I know the cleaning crew,” Norling says. “For a while they were all Hispanic, and women. ... [This was] a middle-aged white guy speaking perfect English.” A few weeks later, on July 5, it happened again.

Nelson met with the building manager, but was offered no explanations or solutions. Nelson started to feel nervous. “I

didn't know what they were doing, what they were looking for ... so I moved all my files,” he says. He took them to his home in the mountain town of Zigzag, because “It's more inconvenient to get there. The home has a burglar alarm, and there's a gate getting into the subdivision.”

Still, within a few weeks he noticed more disturbing signs. Multiple times, he came home to find that the electricity had been out and the alarm deactivated. The alarm company failed to follow protocol and notify him of the lapse in service. When he called to inquire, they were uncharacteristically circumspect.

At that point, Nelson started to suspect federal involvement. “When the FBI wants to go to a place, they put out what's called a ‘National Security Letter,’” he explains. “That letter tells, for example, the landlord, or another person who might have to facilitate the entry, that it is illegal

to ever say anything about the assistance that is provided. My guess is that those letters went out to the building management, including the security company, and to the alarm company.”

In December, when the *New York Times* revealed the existence of a National Security Agency (NSA) domestic eavesdropping program, the pieces started coming together. The NSA was listening in on international calls to or from the United States, and Nelson was representing an Islamic charity, Al-Haramain, that had been accused of funding Chechen terrorists. The charges were eventually dropped, but the organization's director, Soliman Al-Buthe, is still wanted for illegally taking money out of the country. Al-Buthe now lives in Saudi Arabia, communicating with his attorneys largely by phone and e-mail.

Nelson won't say how, but he had received a document showing, he says, that these confidential attorney-client conversations had been intercepted. He knew right away that the document was important, but didn't realize just how important it was. When he learned of the NSA program, it seemed what he had was not just evidence of the government overstepping its bounds in one particular case, but evidence suggesting an entire program of government misconduct.

The break-ins suddenly made a lot more sense: “Keep in mind that these break-ins occurred after the illegal wiretaps and before the illegal wiretaps were public knowledge. It's more than a neat coincidence,” Nelson says. “Overall, I think they were fishing for a document that they thought perhaps could forestall the entire NSA investigation that's going on now.”

In other words, the break-ins were part of an attempted cover-up. “It's worrisome,” Nelson says, “that they went to that kind of effort to hide what we allege is an illegal program—not just ‘kind of’ illegal, but a fundamental violation of basic constitutional principles.”

On Feb. 28, Nelson became the first attorney to file a suit alleging specific damages from the NSA spy program. The complaint—*Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation v. Bush*—accuses the NSA of

monitoring communications between Al-Buthe and two of Al-Haramain's lawyers, Wendell Belew and Asim Ghafoor. It also alleges that the NSA then shared its information with the Treasury Department, who used it to freeze Al-Haramain's assets.

The NSA has refused to acknowledge or deny involvement. But Nelson's theory is plausible. The sort of surveillance the lawsuit alleges—focusing on international calls to supposed terror suspects—fits within the scope of the NSA's activities.

But it is impossible to verify Nelson's specific claims without seeing the evidence. And the crucial document has not only been sealed by the court, but transferred to Seattle and placed in a sensitive compartmented information facility (SCIF)—a specialized vault designed to hold classified documents. Steve Borgen, the security expert for the U.S. Attorney who determined that the document should be stored in the SCIF, declined to say why it required such protection, saying only that "it just had to do with the content of the document itself." Nelson won't discuss its contents either, except to say "the document supports the allega-

tion that's in [our] complaint."

However, Nelson suggests that the document is being so closely guarded, not because of the information it reports, but because of how that information was collected. "I think the interesting thing about the document isn't what's in it, but rather ... that it supports our complaint of warrantless wiretapping." If he's right, then the government is protecting a secret that is already public knowledge.

Nelson expects that the document will eventually be declassified. *The Oregonian* has petitioned the court to make it public. While the Justice Department opposes the newspaper's motion altogether, Nelson asks only that the attorney-client correspondence be deleted.

In the meantime, Nelson is focused on the larger issue: "I don't mind the spying. I don't mind the eavesdropping. [But] do it through a judge," he says. "If you take out the judges, which the NSA program does, you run a real serious possibility of tyranny."

KRISTIAN WILLIAMS is the author, most recently, of *American Methods: Torture and the Logic of Domination*.

Minor League Umps Call a (Labor) Strike

ON APRIL 2, after a three-hour rain delay, the defending-champion Chicago White Sox picked up right where they left off in October, clobbering the visiting Cleveland Indians 10-4 in Major League Baseball's (MLB) season opener. While the clouds relented to reassure baseball fans that spring had returned, two days later the rumblings of a labor dispute marred the debut of the less glamorous minor league season: Citing alleged union-busting by management, minor league umpires went on strike.

The conflict started back in February when the umpires' employer, Professional Baseball Umpire Corporation (PBUC), declared an impasse in contract negotiations with the Association of Minor League Umpires (AMLU). At issue was the terms of a the umpires' first pay-raise in a decade. The union says it's badly needed: on average, umpires earn between \$5,500 in the rookie leagues and \$15,000 in Triple-A over a five-month,



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JONATHAN DANIEL/GETTY IMAGES

This ump made the jump, but not many do.

142-game season. In contrast, a MLB ump, working a 162-game schedule, starts out at \$84,000 (not including potential bonuses and ample compensation for expenses) and tops out at nearly \$300,000.

On March 24, the union announced it had filed unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board and was planning to strike. The AMLU alleges management threatened to fire umps who went on strike and find replacements, in violation of labor law. Two days after the AMLU issued its statement, PBUC lawyer George Yund told the Associated Press that the union was “changing their story” after previously “threatening to strike in support of their contract demands for weeks.”

With their paychecks cut off, the umpires will have to find other ways to make ends meet, something they’re used to. Off-season work is essential for minor league umpires. Brian Kennedy, a 31-year-old Double-A umpire from Charlotte, N.C., coordinates deliveries for his brother-in-law’s tile and granite company when away from the diamond. Like the aspiring ballplayers whose on-field fate they preside over, umpires are hard-working dream chasers devoted to baseball and willing to do whatever it takes to make it to the sport’s ultimate stage. Andy Roberts, AMLU president and an ump at the Triple-A level based out of Birmingham, Ala., puts it this way: “We love the game. We want to contribute.”

But if umping at this level has never been about the money, why are they striking? Well, love can only get you so far. Double-A umpire Brandon Bushee of Fort Wayne, Ind., who has pieced togeth-

er out-of-season jobs in construction, retail and substitute teaching, says many employers aren’t interested in workers who are only available for half the year.

And what’s a good umpire worth? Both Roberts and Kennedy played baseball in college, but they have found that as umpires they play a more meaningful role. “I played a lot of baseball growing up,” Kennedy says, “but I don’t look through the eyes of a player anymore.” For Roberts, nothing beats “calling a good game [as home-plate ump] and no one behind the plate says a word.”

Kennedy, sounding like an apprentice in love with his craft and in awe of its masters, refers to umps at the major league level as “men of character” who “uphold the integrity of baseball.”

But the apprenticeship often proves bittersweet, given the slim likelihood of breaking into the majors. Rising through the farm system ranks up to the big show is not a meritocracy, but a lottery. Only three umpires have been called up since 2000. The major league season opened with only 68 full-time umpires, none of whom are new hires. When an ump makes it, he stays put, living out his dream and finally earning a big-league

paycheck. To be part of the less than one percent of a graduating umpire class to reach the majors, an aspiring ump needs something beyond his training: luck.

First, an open spot must be available. Then, after having made it from the rookie leagues to Triple-A (which often takes at least seven to 10 years), having participated in a fall instructional league in Arizona and spring training (which both require invites), and finally becoming a major league fill-in, it comes down to the opinion of supervisors. “It takes someone to like you,” Kennedy says. A major league umpire supervisor might be impressed by an ump nicely handling a close call or argument at a pivotal moment, but that supervisor must witness such a precious flash.

Since making it to the bigs requires both time and timing, for the umps on strike the tangible goal is securing the conditions needed to hang in there. Commenting on the growing numbers of older umps who can no longer afford to stay in the hunt, Roberts says, “Ten to 14 years of life invested and it can be done in the flick of a light switch.” They’re holding out for the lights to stay on a bit longer.

—Jeffrey Lane

act now



LIVE STRONG, VOTE STRONG

In 2004, a family from Moscow, Idaho decided to protest Bush’s reelection by peddling a fad fashion: the plastic charity wristband. In contrast to Lance Armstrong’s sunny yellow “LiveStrong” logo, Nation Divided’s bracelets are matte black and emblazoned with “I did not vote 4 Bush.”

All the profits from the \$3 bands are donated to groups that “fight Bush’s most destructive policies.” To date, more than \$51,000 has been donated to organizations like MoveOn.org and Planned Parenthood. The bands have been spotted on Tipper Gore and former Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura. To order your own, check out www.nationdivided.com.

Locating Argentine Memories

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA—STEP into the small offices of the Archive for Permanent Memory (Archivo Permanente Para La Memoria) and follow the main hallway to reach a cramped room divided up by computer stations, shelves that hold meticulously organized stacks of binders, boxes of cassettes and discs, and a gaggle of stereos and audio recording equipment. Pictures of smiling young people dot the walls.

"This is my mother, and here is my father," says Lorena Battistiol, pointing to a poster with a smattering of black and white passport-type photos. "They were disappeared in 1977 when I was one year old. We are still looking for my younger brother—or sister. We know my mother gave birth in captivity, we just don't know if it was a boy or a girl."

Battistiol, 30, is one of the few full-time employees at the Archive, where the lives of people cut short by state terror are being pieced together and archived in the hopes that one day their missing children will have a chance to learn about the parents they never knew. The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, the pioneering Argentine human rights group, inaugurated the Archive in 1998 with help from the University of Buenos Aires.

Case by case, family members and friends are interviewed, old photographs are collected and filed, family trees compiled. The finished product is a confidential folio of transcribed interviews, cassettes, and discs of digitized photographs, which staff members hope to give to the missing children of the disappeared, when or if they are ever located. "When a child is found, the Grandmothers have a ceremony where they present the book," Battistiol says. "It's really an incredibly emotional moment."

To recap the tragedy: In 1976 a troika of right-wing generals, among them graduates of the U.S. Army School of the Americas, staged a coup and implemented a bloody campaign to eradicate "subversion" and to eliminate opposition to the implementation of a conservative economic regime.

Tens of thousand of Argentines were detained, tortured and buried in mass graves or thrown alive into the ocean during regular death flights. What sets

this story apart from other similarly brutal Latin American dictatorships of the '70s and the '80s is what they did to the children of the disappeared.

Up to 500 children of *desaparecidos*, some born to imprisoned mothers and others only babies when they were kidnapped along with their parents, were given away, mostly to police and military families. Birth certificates were falsified and names were changed. To date, 82 of these children have been identified.

Juan Cabandie, 28, is one of them—the 77th "found" child. For 26 years Cabandie was Mariano Falco. After becoming estranged from his abusive father, a policeman and former intelligence agent of the dictatorship, and spending years having nagging doubts about his identity, Cabandie approached the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo after seeing one of their TV spots that asked, "Do you know who you really are?"

In 2004, a blood test confirmed that Cabandie was the son of Alicia Elena Alfonsín and Damián Abel Cabandie, both last seen alive in 1978 at ESMA (Army School of Mechanics), one of the largest of 480 concentration camps operated during the dictatorship. Through the memory book created at the Archive he learned the details of his birth as reported by survivors of ESMA who shared a cell with Alicia, his mother.

"I was born here at the ESMA. I spent only 15 days here with my mother before they took her away," Cabandie told a crowd of thousands gathered around a stage set up in front of the school. "With us they thought they could destroy the memories and the hopes of our parents, who fought for a better future, for a country where there aren't millions of people socially disappeared by poverty and hunger, like the country we have now."

Cabandie addressed the crowd on March 24—the 30th anniversary of the military coup, recently declared a national day of memory by the government of President Nestor Kirchner. A year earlier, the former concentration camp was designated a museum of memory and will soon be open to the public. It is one sign that the wheels of justice are beginning to move in Argentina, albeit slowly.

Last fall, a renovated Argentine Supreme Court struck down the amnesty laws that protected the military for decades, and federal prosecutors are now

preparing hundreds of "mega-cases" against retired military officials. Weekly hearings in the capital have begun to record the sworn testimony of survivors and witnesses of those bloody years.

"I am here as proof that they didn't succeed," says Cabandie, "that their macabre plan of robbing babies won't succeed, and that even over the bodies of 30,000 disappeared Argentines, their plan won't succeed."

— Joseph Huff-Hannon



"Disappeared" but not forgotten in Argentina

Walking Out and Standing Up

LOS ANGELES—NO ONE knows exactly how it started: fliers, text messages, MySpace bulletins and one code phrase—HR 4437—circulated throughout schools and cyberspaces over the course of a few days. But the massive student walkouts that occurred between March 24 and 30 were among the largest in California's history.

Adults observing 40,000 students in Southern California spilling into the streets expressed skepticism. "These kids don't know anything," NPR's Juan Williams told Bill O'Reilly on a March 29 episode of "The O'Reilly Factor." Other commentators dismissed their actions as truancy.

But the spontaneous eruption of a massive, coordinated walkout was proof that these students, no matter how poor, deprived or English-limited, used technology and networking to make themselves heard. "You know how they say that you have to take action and show what you're

going for in order for them to pay attention to you?" says Brenda Rodriguez, a senior at Wilson High School in East Los Angeles. "That's exactly what they did. And nationally, everyone did the same thing. I think we were on the right page."

While traditional progressive organizers are scrambling to coordinate next steps, no formal leaders organized these protests. "I think everybody was a leader because they had to be. Because they stood up for themselves," says Miguel Lopez, a senior at Garfield High School in East L.A. who walked out.

This newly politicized base is communicating with each other through an extensive and quickly-evolving social digital network.

"It's like a game, you build up your strength with friends," says Adrian Avila, a recent community college graduate in San Jose, explaining how word of the walkout spread on MySpace. "So, if you send a bulletin to 1,000 friends, 10 will repost it and then eventually thousands will see it." Just after the April 10 nationwide immigrant marches, MySpace bulletins were already announcing the nationwide boycott scheduled for May 1. A bulletin

called "accionprimerodemayo" ("May 1st day of action") posted by a student at Silicon Valley Debug, a grassroots, youth-run publication, had been reposted 30 times by the next day.

These new tools are joined to a direct sense of political urgency. "It's not just their parents that are at risk here," says Lorena Rodriguez, a senior at Garfield High School. "It might be also them." The Los Angeles Unified School District does not track how many students are immigrant or undocumented, but 43 percent of the district's students are learning English.

These students' sentiments do not drip with the politicized language of eager college activists. Their demand was pragmatic and immediate: putting a stop to bills like HR 4437—which passed in the House and which would make felons out of undocumented immigrants, their families and anyone else caught within arm's reach. "We were just right there showing support for our parents," says Jennifer Lopez, a senior at Manual Arts High School in South L.A., "and showing [that] they can't try to just sneak up this stupid law on us,"

"I don't think the moment has passed," says Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villara-

gosa. "I think these young people are undergoing a transformation." A participant in the famous Chicano student walkouts in 1968 (celebrated in a recent HBO film, *Walkout*), the mayor told students that he supported their efforts, but stressed that it was equally important that they succeed in school. "We can't have you fail," he said to a group of student leaders he met with after the rally in front of City Hall.

Throughout California, there is an overwhelming sense that the point of this political moment for these students is not the advancement of a theme, but the redefinition of what it means to be an immigrant in the United States. There is genuine excitement about the legitimate force they represent in numbers—and the power that their collective voices have the capacity to wield.

"It was really, really great," says Miguel Lopez, who dreams of going to University of California, Berkeley, and was born in the United States but has an undocumented sister. "It's our own kind. It's the youth actually speaking out and walking, doing this for a change."

—Daffodil Altan

appall-o-meter

3.5 Arms Dealing for Extra Credit

School kids in England and Ireland have been getting up to some pretty interesting extracurricular activities of late: buying torture devices and small arms. According to the *Guardian*, students at Lord Williams's School in Thame, England, set up companies to import such goodies as thumb and wall cuff restraints, and a spiked doodad from China known as a "sting stick."

They incorporated one of the companies in Ireland so as to skirt British restrictions on small arms. They used the Irish firm to arrange "the sale of Pakistani grenade launchers to Syria, Turkish guns to Mali, and South African rifles to Israel." Meanwhile, students near Dublin "succeeded in buying electric shock batons from Korea and leg irons from South Africa."

Don't worry: The British Isles are not gripped by Columbine fever. The students were only trying to prove a point. "It should not be legal," explained a Lord Williams pupil, "and yet we've proved that children ... can broker arms."

7.9 Don't Tread on Me

Charles Martin, 66, is a type of Middle American any paperboy would recognize: ornery, self-pitying and likely to unleash hell if you violate the sanctity of his lawn. In March, Martin called 911 from his home in suburban Cincinnati after a run-in with a neighborhood boy, who had traipsed across the old man's lawn one time too many. Here's a partial transcript: **Martin:** I've been being harassed by him and his parents for five years. Today just blew it up. Kid's just been giving me a bunch of shit, making the other kids harass me and my place, tearing things up. **Operator:** OK, so what'd you do?

Martin: I shot him with a goddam .410 shotgun twice.

Martin downed the 15-year-old with one shot and administered the coup de grace from close range. Another fatality from the frontier of lawn order.

3.8 Camp Sodom

What do you call it when one camp



counselor restrains a boy while another pokes a broomstick in the boy's wazoo?

Clifton Bennett, 18, and Kyle Wheeler, 19, former counselors at Chapel Rock "leadership" camp in Prescott, Ariz., call it "brooming," and they admit to having broomed 18 middle-school boys.

Parents of the broomed boys prefer to call it sexual assault, but oddly enough, Yavapai County prosecutors don't agree. They charged Bennett with one misdemeanor count of aggravated assault. (Wheeler got another charge for allegedly choking a few boys till they passed out.)

What explains this leniency? Surely it had nothing to do with Bennett's father, Arizona Senate President Ken Bennett (R-Flagstaff). According to the *Flagstaff Arizona Daily Sun*, Bennett's lawyers begged prosecutors to consider Bennett's duty as a Mormon, noting, "A felony conviction for assault will make his desire to complete his mission impossible."

—Dave Mulcahey

Putting the IRS to Political Use?

IN SEPTEMBER 2005, an Internal Revenue Service auditor darkened the door of Greenpeace, the organization known for its frontline environmental activism against nuclear testing, commercial whaling and destruction of wilderness, and stayed for three months.

"There's no doubt there was a political motive behind it," says Carol Gregory, spokeswoman for Greenpeace.

According to the group, the auditor confirmed that the investigation was instigated by a letter sent in 2003 to the IRS by Public Interest Watch (PIW), a Los Angeles-based nonprofit organization whose motto is "Keeping an eye on the self-appointed guardians of the public interest."

PIW asked the agency to investigate the U.S. affiliate of Amsterdam-based Greenpeace for using tax-exempt donations to fund non-tax-exempt activities in violation of U.S. tax laws.

"I don't have a professional problem with Greenpeace's agenda; I have a problem with them using their tax-exempt status to engage in what is, in my opinion, political behavior," says Lewis Fein, PIW's interim executive director. "We police nonprofit abuse; we are non-ideological."

Greenpeace believes that Exxon Mobil Corp., which for the past five years has been a frequent target of Greenpeace political actions for its position on global warming, was the catalyst for the audit. "We were campaigning very effectively against Exxon Mobil and it was part of their tactic to try to silence us, or at least tie us up in knots in dealing with the audit," says Tom Wetterer, a Greenpeace attorney.

In 2003, PIW was almost entirely funded by Exxon Mobil. Of the \$124,094 in donations PIW received between August 2003 and July 2004, \$120,000 came from the oil company.

According to Fein, the decision to focus on Greenpeace was not influenced by Exxon Mobil's funding. "I have never spoken with anyone from Exxon; nobody has ever called me from Exxon; I have never corresponded with anyone from Exxon," said Fein, who took over in March 2004.

"I'd be surprised if everyone connected to PIW back then could make the same statement, given that then Exxon Mobil was pretty close to being its full funder

snapshot



LOS ANGELES—The California Nurses Association (CNA) kicked off a ballot initiative drive in Los Angeles by scrubbing clean a Republican elephant and Democratic donkey—just as their "clean money elections" measure will scrub dirty corporate money out of politics. CNA led labor's fight last year against Arnold Schwarzenegger, and now aims to lessen the influence of his donors. (Photo by Tom Dunne)

[at that time]," says Wetterer.

In an e-mail, Exxon Mobil spokesman Mark Boudreaux said the corporation is no longer funding PIW and gave its last donation in 2004. "We gave general support to the organization, not earmarked for any specific purpose," he said.

After an extensive investigation of Greenpeace's compliance with tax laws as well as its political activities, the IRS auditor found that Greenpeace's acts of civil disobedience were too small compared to its other activities to warrant a revocation of its nonprofit status. Wetterer says Greenpeace is making efforts to comply with several advisories issued by the auditor.

"Our concern is that industry can use a nonprofit to come after us because we've challenged their opinion on global warming," Wetterer says. "It's a misuse of the tax system to get the IRS to conduct an audit based on spurious allegations."

An IRS representative says the agency does not discuss the process for selecting organizations to audit. Anyone can refer an individual or business to the IRS for investigation through a letter or a referral form on the IRS Web site. Referrals

can be made anonymously.

"[The IRS has] simply refused to provide statistical data in terms of what their enforcement is," says Susan Long, co-director of the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), a Syracuse, N.Y.-based organization that researches the federal government's staffing, spending and enforcement activities.

Early this month, TRAC won a lawsuit against the IRS in federal court, which ordered the agency to turn over data pertaining to tax audits and examinations. "Hopefully part of what will be there is some information about sources of audit and statistics," Long says.

In the meantime, the reasons behind IRS audits of nonprofit organizations remain elusive.

Fein declined to comment on organizations currently under investigation by PIW. But other nonprofits on the "Dirty Half Dozen" list on PIW's Web site include Rainforest Action Network and MoveOn.org, as well as Pat Buchanan's The American Cause and the anti-immigration group Federation for American Immigration Reform.

— Emily Udell

BY SUSAN J. DOUGLAS

Congenital Liars and Hypocrites



THE CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT of the Bush administration's first term was public relations, spin and salesmanship. So how can it be that now, in addition to everything else it has bungled or destroyed, the administration has discredited public relations itself?

Ivy Lee (a.k.a. "Poison Ivy"), the "father" of public relations in the early 20th century, pioneered what was then a revolutionary PR strategy: Tell the truth, appear

open and thus sympathetic, and move on. For example, Lee counseled the Pennsylvania Railroad—notorious for its refusal to provide information or interviews to reporters, especially after accidents—to admit their mistakes, vow to do better and let newspapers in on the story rather than try to suppress it. He insisted that honesty and directness were better PR tools than deception. That way, of course, as corporations have found ever since, companies could also better manage the flow of information about themselves and more subtly craft their images.

But the Bush "CEO presidency" has used every PR trick in the book—and then some—not to try to put a more favorable spin on events and policies, but to spin flat-out lies into facts. And really, this administration has not been engaging in PR. It's been engaging in distortions and lies—in other words, propaganda—and has helped blur the line between the two.

And this is not just standard propaganda, as practiced on Voice of America, with motives that, however dubious at times, are transparent. No, this is what has been termed "black propaganda," a practice that relies on passing false information and deceptions to a targeted group—in this case, the American public. Such psychological warfare was used by several countries in World War II. Japan, for example, dropped pamphlets in the Philippines—ostensibly written by the U.S. Army—claiming the native women were disease-ridden.

In choosing this approach, the current administration took a nice page out of Bush Senior's playbook. In 1990, under the coaching of PR firm Hill & Knowlton, the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States posed as "Nayria" during the run-up to "Desert Storm." She falsely testified before a Congressional caucus that Iraqi soldiers had come into a Kuwaiti hospital with guns, ripped hundreds of babies out of their incubators and left them on the

cold floor to die. Not surprisingly, this helped Bush Sr. get the votes he needed for our first military adventure in Iraq.

And now, we have the revelation that Bush himself may have authorized the leak of bogus intelligence information to the press to buttress the sales pitch for invading Iraq.

Scott McClellan's efforts to spin this make Bill Clinton's efforts to parse the meaning of "is" seem ingenuous. McClellan argues that even though Bush has been emphatic about denouncing leaks, it was OK for Bush to do it because this leak was in the interest of national security. Passing misinformation that Saddam Hussein was seeking nuclear weapons to the likes of *Times* reporter Judy Miller did not "compromise national security," McClellan insisted in an April 8 press briefing.

In light of the subsequent diversion of Americans' attention away from al Qaeda and toward Iraq, the unnecessary deaths of our soldiers, the rise in terrorism in the region and the engorged hatred of Americans that resulted from the invasion, it seems fair to say Bush's actions had a devastating effect on national security.

So why is there not a much

more outraged and robust movement for impeachment?

Of course, the quick answer is that Republicans control the House and Senate. Still, (through a clear failure of imagination) I never thought anyone in my lifetime would be worse than Nixon, but Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld actually are. Lying to Congress and the public in order to invade Iraq, illegally spying on and wiretapping Americans, authorizing torture and renditions, trying to strip Americans of their rights by seeking to detain people without access to legal counsel, the indefinite detention of non-citizens against whom no formal specific charges have been made and, possibly, leaking the name of a CIA operative all seem to be worthy of impeachment hearings. But that's just the propaganda of the left, right?

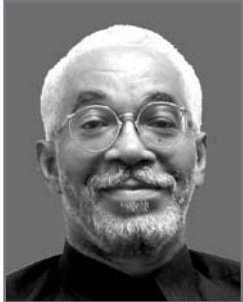
Here we see the deeper reason that calls for censure and impeachment are floundering. One of the deep consequences of the relentless Bush propaganda is that millions of people now struggle daily to figure out what actually are facts and what is spin. In this environment, everything is spin, and laws and facts are cast as debatable, mere opinions. Everything is partisan, everything "framed."

Team Bush has not just discredited itself by over-reaching on the propaganda front, allowing reporters, bloggers and activists to repeatedly reveal them as congenital liars and hypocrites. They have contaminated public debate by implying that there is never any truth to be known. ■

One of the deep consequences of the relentless Bush propaganda is that millions of people now struggle daily to figure out what actually are facts.

BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

Black Men: The Crisis Continues



ACCORDING TO *THE New Yorker's* Seymour Hersh, the Bush administration seems poised to bomb Iran and drag us further into the pit of international infamy. Bush has admitted he declassified data to damn critics and that he's wiretapping Americans at his own discretion.

Thousands, perhaps millions, of Latinos demonstrated in the streets of America this spring, forcing this nation to take note of an awakening giant. Even as war drums rumble in the oil-rich Middle East, oil-rich Nigeria is rising as the new focus of U.S. belligerence. My mouth waters at the prospect of tackling some of those issues. But that will have to wait.

Instead, I must return to a subject that is depressingly familiar: African Americans are in the midst of a social crisis that threatens the very viability of the black community. The core of this crisis is the deepening plight of black men.

Although black men are conspicuously successful in many arenas of American life, they are facing a social emergency. Throughout America, but especially in the inner cities, African-American men are disproportionately surrounded by poverty, violence, mass incarceration and disease. A confluence of ills has long conspired to marginalize black men and track them into a trajectory of failure.

But a flurry of recent studies reveal that their decline in socio-economic status is more rapid than previously thought, and prompted the *New York Times* to publish a front page story in late March on their deepening plight. "Black men in the United States face a far more dire situation than is portrayed by common employment and education statistics," reads the lead sentence.

The problems afflicting black men have been well-charted both in academia and in the streets, so this information is not exactly new. In fact, African-American activists have long quipped that black men were an endangered species. As these new studies reveal, we still have failed to summon adequate concern for the wide scope of these problems, which I believe have now reached emergency status.

The *Times* quoted Ronald B. Mincy, professor of social work at Columbia University, who said, "There's something very different happening with young black men, and it's something we can no longer ignore." Mincy is also the editor of *Black Males Left Behind*, a 2006 book that attempts

to quantify the extent of their decline. "Over the last two decades, the economy did great," he told the *Times*, "and low-skilled women, helped by public policy, latched onto it. But young black men were falling farther back."

Mincy favors increased public investment into the education of black men as the most promising strategy. But because of the current political climate, he has few hopes the government will implement such a policy.

The various studies outlined in the *Times* piece reached sobering conclusions about how we've previously understated the extent of black men's problems. Among other things, the new studies found:

- More than half of all black men in the nation's inner cities drop out of high school.
- More than 70 percent of black male high school dropouts in their 20s were out of work in 2004.
- By their mid-30s, 60 percent of high school dropouts have served time in jail.

A confluence of ills has long conspired to marginalize black men and track them into a trajectory of failure.

The scholars cite many reasons for this deterioration.

Primary among them are bad schools, absent parents, racism, structural changes in the economy and a subculture that glorifies gangsterism.

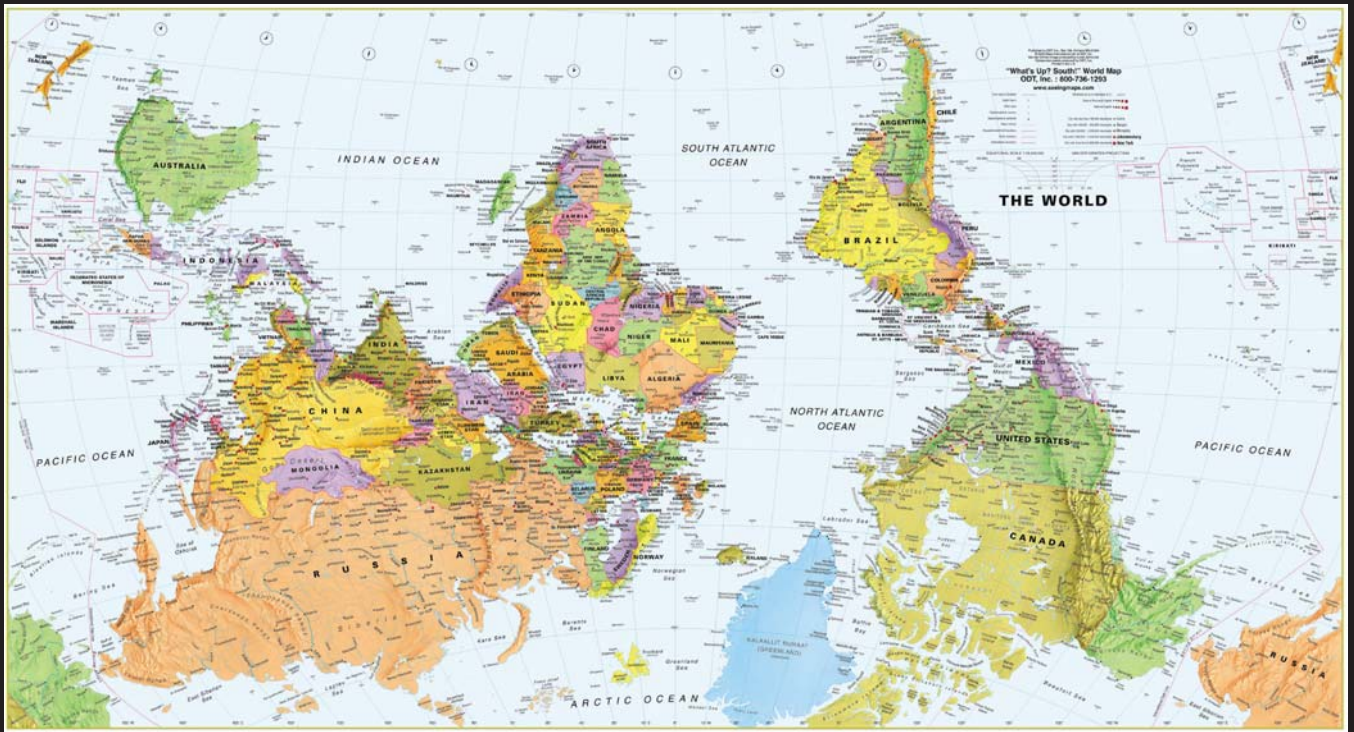
The *Times* piece is just the latest in several articles that have brought attention to this growing crisis and its many implications. Perhaps the most distressing implication is the growing gender imbalance between black men and black women.

The toll of inner-city life is serving to de-populate many black communities of its men. I wrote about this problem last year in a column, "Black Men: Missing," that examined these gender imbalances. Homicidal violence, life-style morbidity, environmental hazards and mass incarceration are depleting the ranks of African-American males at an alarming rate, I wrote. This gap threatens to destabilize the black community in ways no outside force has managed to in the entire history of African Americans, most of whom are the progeny of enslaved Africans.

In most of America's cities, black women outnumber black men by large margins and the gap grows wider as women become more educated. But even as they prosper, black women still withstand the worst of urban poverty as single parents in their disinvested neighborhoods.

I'd like to focus on other subjects, but the ramifications of the current crisis are too broad and deep, with ominous implications for the nation at large. ■

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BY LAURA S. WASHINGTON

Solidarity from Barrio to Barbershop



THERE'S NO DOUBT that Mexican men and women—full of dignity, will-power and a capacity for work—are doing the work that not even blacks want to do in the United States.”

Mexican President Vicente Fox's comments last year to a group of Mexican businessmen ignited a political firestorm across the Americas. Fox also foreshadowed a powerful divide in the national debate over immigration reform.

He was defending Mexican immigrants, arguing they are hard-working, essential assets to the American economy. Some African Americans retorted that Fox's declaration was racist and demeaning, and that “they” are breaking our laws and taking our jobs.

There is *esperanza*. In February, a provocative museum exhibit opened in Chicago that is confronting Mexico's racist past head-on.

“The African Presence in Mexico” opened in February at the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, the largest Latino arts organization in the United States. The museum is a cultural centerpiece of the largely Mexican Pilsen neighborhood on Chicago's Southwest Side. The show traces the Mexican “Third Root”—what the museum calls the “missing chapter” of Mexican history—500 years of African contributions to Mexican society and culture.

Africans were first brought in bondage to Mexico in 1519. On Jan. 6, 1609, Yanga, an African leader, founded the first free African township in the Americas. Since then, black Mexicans have made an indelible mark on the nation's art, music, cuisine and culture.

The exhibit runs in Chicago through Sept. 3, and will later travel across the United States and Mexico. It is bolstered by an assiduous effort by Latino and African-American leaders to educate their constituents about common goals and identities.

Yet staging the exhibit epitomizes the ambivalence about forging alliances among both African Americans and Latinos. Museum President Carlos Tortolero had braced himself. He knew it would push buttons, he says, and the museum has received “obscene phone calls” from people objecting to the embrace of Mexican blackness. Still, the show is drawing record crowds. Many are African-American.

For me, the exhibit recalled memories of growing up in Chicago in the '60s, when Chicago was as segregated as the Deep South. We lived on the city's black South Side. Most

black folks never ventured outside of the 'hood, much less to Latino enclaves on the other side of town. But my mother worked on 18th Street, a bustling Pilsen barrio. She did clerical work alongside Mexican immigrant ladies at the Bethlehem Center, a now-defunct settlement house. She brought home kind words about her *hermanas* along with some killer taco recipes. The night of an infamous “Big Snow,” a record blizzard, a co-worker gave her a ride home in the middle of the night. I was proud of my mother's solidarity with her Mexican sisters. I thought she was, too.

Now I have to drop a dime on Mama. The other day I called to say hello. She had been watching footage of the massive marches advocating for immigration reform. Mama delivered a 20-minute rant aimed at Latino immigrants.

Her voice dripped with disgust. “Those people are breaking the law. They have no right to be here. They are taking our jobs. They don't even want to learn to speak English. We're paying for their health care ... their schools. And they have the nerve to demand, demand that we give them citizenship!”

It was ugly. I tried to reason with her, but I couldn't get a word in edgewise.

And Mom is not alone. In the heat of the ongoing debate over immigration reform, her sentiments are echoed in venues from black talk radio to the barbershops.

For once, the leaders may be ahead of the flock. Last spring Antonio R. Villaraigosa was elected the first Mexican-American mayor of Los Angeles since 1872 on the strength of a progressive black/brown coalition. He follows in the footsteps of Harold Washington, who was elected in 1983 as Chicago's first black mayor by an alliance of blacks, Latinos and liberal whites.

U.S. Rep. Luis Gutierrez, a Puerto Rican seven-term member from Chicago's Northwest Side, has announced he will soon give up his seat to launch what he calls a cross between a Latino Rainbow PUSH and a political action committee. He recently teamed up with U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. in a black/brown bid to elect Joy Cunningham, an African-American woman, to the Illinois Appellate Court.

Still, if you survey the crowds at those pro-immigrant marches, you don't see many African-American faces. The grassroots is not there yet.

The pols must convince the people that it is in their urgent interest to resist the divisive race-baiting propagated by the powers that be. “African Presence” confirms there are spots to hoe common ground. I'm working on getting Mama to the show. ■

If you survey the crowds at the pro-immigrant marches, you don't see many African-American faces. The grassroots need to be there.

THE FIRST STONE

BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

What Ails Us?



DOES GEORGE BUSH get you down?

Does your mind go numb when you read another story about another GOP-legislated atrocity?

Do you feel that you just can't take any more of it? That you just are too tired to care?

You could be suffering from outrage fatigue. In which case, you are not alone.

The other day an editor here groaned, "Not another torture story." A colleague snapped back, "That's a win for them."

The Web has been abuzz with discussions about "outrage fatigue" and its debilitating effects. Consider the following thoughts on the syndrome, gleaned from postings over the past couple years.

There is despair:

"I'm sorry guys, with so many things to be outraged about I'm worn down. It's partly because it feels like nothing you do with the outrage has any effect," writes Spocko.

"There has been so much to be outraged about from the Republicans the past six years and yet they have never been held to account. It is easy to just feel powerless and give up. It hurts too much to care about the state of the country," writes Erik.

There is resignation:

"I just can't get too outraged anymore since every day brings a new outrage. Law of diminishing returns and all that jazz I guess," writes Cursed Pirate Monkey.

"It used to be I'd have opinions on the latest scary news of the government and all that shizzle, but over time, U.S. political shit has ended up provoking more a 'meh' reaction than anything else. ... Just how mad

can any single thing make a dude? The answer is that each drumbeat of the march in the wrong national direction reduces the capacity for outrage. Hence outrage muthafuckin' fatigue, yo. My friend Bill is one of those lefty dudes who sends tons of e-mails like, 'Man, can you believe this shit?' Sorry Bill, but the muthafuckin' truth hurts: I usually glance at your forward, think to myself, 'Yes, that does kinda suck,' then instantly trash the e-mail and go back to Fark," writes Pat in Politics.

There is fear:

"The effect of outrage fatigue is actually scary—things that should be considered very damaging by the American voter just get slipped under the rug with very little notice. ... The Bush White House has successfully recalibrated outrage meters so dramatically that we, and the American public, can hardly remember how we used to react to various kinds of events," writes Franklyo.

There is backlash:

"As to outrage: What matters is getting Bush out of office. ... The Bushies could care less how outraged you are. It's the rope-a-dope defense. By November, all of our outrage reservoirs will be completely empty and we won't even have the energy to vote," writes Cleek.

"There's this new chic meme out there in the blogosphere that people are calling 'outrage fatigue.' I dislike the term immensely. I actually think there's this kind of spiritual battle between the concept of 'standing up for what's right' and the concepts of cynicism, snarkiness and bitchy hopelessness. Referring to 'outrage fatigue' is just another way to make it okay to lose hope," writes Curt. To which Cat, in despair mode, responds: "When you say 'Outrage Fatigue,' I interpret it as that awful feeling when you just have to stop

reading the news for a while. When you fear that if you hear one more crappy thing, you'll just crawl under your bed and die slowly."

While Suzanne Marshall had this to say: "Even though I know how seriously messed-up the situation is in Iraq, I've become inured to all but the most extreme levels of wrongdoing. For months, no amount of civilian bombing could get me mad. Then those amazing photos of the tortured Iraqi prisoners hit the streets, and I got that old rush of overwhelming disgust with my government. Then more photos came out, and more officials were implicated, and now—I don't know. It's like a switch in my head turned off again." Whoops, that last quote was from the *Onion*, playing off the zeitgeist.

Like its cousins—combat fatigue, donor fatigue, compassion fatigue, chronic fatigue, metal fatigue—outrage fatigue has yet to be recognized, or even noted, by the American Psychological Association. That could change as it begins to turn up in therapists' caseloads. Jon Carroll reports in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "A therapist I know says that more and more people are showing up at her door with a nonspecific anxiety disorder, which turns out to be shame and confusion about the state of the nation."

So what's the cure?

Outrage is a little bit like anger. Therapist Margaret Paul observes, "Anger that comes from an adult, rational place can be called outrage. Outrage is the feeling we have when confronted with injustice. Outrage mobilizes us to take appropriate action when harm is being done to ourselves, others and the planet."

And like anger, when we don't express our outrage, we repress it and turn that outrage in on ourselves.

That can have bad effects according to Ease@Work, a company that ad-



vises businesses on how to treat employees. "Repressed anger is unexpressed anger. Some people can internalize anger so that they fool others, and sometimes themselves, into believing they are not angry. The problem with repressed anger is that it is turned back inside the person, leading to health problems such as hypertension, stroke, and heart disease. ... Bottling up this powerful emotion can make some people withdraw and lose interest in others and in activities, common signs of depression."

In the case of a person grappling with outrage fatigue, the easiest solution is to protect yourself from bad news and learn not to care. Another solution is to do something about your outrage. Nurture it. Express it.

Bang a pot. In December 2001 in Argentina, pot bangers led a popular revolt against IMF-imposed economic austerity measures and toppled the government.

That has been tried here. As the *Washington Times* reported earlier this year, "Liberal activists—among them graying leftovers from the Vietnam-era antiwar movement—plan to gather near the

Capitol tonight, banging pots and pans to drown out President Bush's State of the Union address." Maybe it didn't work, but it no doubt felt good.

Managing Terror

While the American Psychological Association has not begun to address the needs of our brothers and sisters suffering outrage fatigue, it has worked closely with the White House in the war on terror. Heeding a call following 9/11 from Presidential Science Advisor John Marburger, the APA asked its members "for examples of research vignettes that might inform (directly or indirectly) strategies to deal with the aftermath of the nation's terrorist attacks."

One of the problems the APA addressed: "What can be done to help people cope with the ongoing threat of terrorism?"

What is known as Terror Management Theory (TMT) has the answer. According to the APA, "From the perspective of TMT, the recent terrorist attacks provided Americans with a massive reminder of death and the fragility of life, coupled

with an attack on the psychological structures that normally protect us from fears of death and vulnerability."

Indeed the public reaction to the attacks is very similar to what psychologists had previously discovered in more than 150 experiments on how people responded to reminders of death and threats to their cultural worldview. According to the APA, these responses include:

- People respond more negatively to those who criticize one's country and behaviorally distance themselves from such individuals.
- People respond more positively to those who praise one's country and behaviorally approach such persons.
- People have increased attraction to heroes and greater reverence for cultural icons, such as American flags or crucifixes.
- People have an increased desire for punishment of moral transgressors.
- People experience a shift toward desires for security and away from desires for freedom.

No wonder we have outrage fatigue.

Postscript

As I was writing this, I was also working with Kurt Vonnegut on something he is writing for *In These Times*. That is, until I received a fax from him that said: "Forget it. I don't want to fight any more."

I faxed back, "Do you think you are suffering from outrage fatigue?" Adding that, if he was, did he have any thoughts about the condition?

The next day I received this fax: "About Outrage Fatigue: I knew what it was like to lose a battle. Now I know what it was like to lose a war."

Fatigued, perhaps. But I am not going to let that get me down. I prefer to ponder the last joke Kurt told me: "George Bush is so dumb it wouldn't surprise me if he thought Peter Pan was a wash basin in a whorehouse." ■

KEEPING AMERICA EMPTY

HOW ONE SMALL-TOWN CONSERVATIONIST LAUNCHED TODAY'S **ANTI-IMMIGRATION** MOVEMENT

BY CHRISTOPHER HAYES

AT THE NORTHERN TIP of Michigan's lower peninsula lies the quaint town of Petoskey, population 6,080. In late March, a thick white shelf of ice still covers Lake Michigan, and a few miles north, over the Mackinac Bridge, the Upper Peninsula appears as a grey tangle of virgin wilderness. This isn't the end of the world, residents say, but you can see it from here.

The town seems to have escaped much of the last four decades. Mom-and-pop stores and unassuming churches line its downtown, and there's hardly a chain restaurant in sight. People wear flag pins on their lapels, even when they're not running for office.

On the day I drive to Petoskey, the radio is buzzing with voices from the Great Immigration Debate: ranting talk show hosts, sermonizing senators and the chanting protests of thousands in Grand Rapids, a few hours south of Petoskey. Like hundreds of thousands of others, they are marching against House-passed legislation that would turn approximately 12 million undocumented immigrants into felons.

All the cacophony lacks is a mention of the one man who set much of this in motion 25 years ago, the man I had come

to see: 72-year-old retired ophthalmologist John Tanton.

Tanton may not make headlines, but even a casual dusting of today's anti-immigration movement reveals his fingerprints everywhere. Turn on Lou Dobbs and you'll see experts from the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), the nation's oldest and most influential immigration restriction group, which Tanton founded in 1979. Scan the newspapers and you'll find Republican lawmakers reporting a tidal wave of calls from members of NumbersUSA, which Tanton cofounded. Watch the committee hearings on C-SPAN and you'll hear anti-immigration talking points lifted straight from the Center for Immigration Studies, another Tanton creation. And on and on.

Thirty years ago, "if you wanted to call some group and say, 'Tell me about immigration,' there was no phone number," recalls founding FAIR board member Otis Graham. Devin Burghart, who monitors the anti-immigration movement for the progressive Center for New Community, says that Tanton has done for immigration politics "what Pat Robertson did for the Christian Right. As a tactician, he's done a brilliant job."



Given that the movement he helped create now finds its base among conservative Republicans, you might expect John Tanton to be an unapologetic reactionary. You'd be wrong. He's a self-described progressive, ex-Sierra Club member, Planned Parenthood supporter and harsh critic of neoclassical economists. So I wanted to know: How did a whip-smart, mild-mannered farm boy committed to conserving the natural world end up seeding and nurturing a movement that now dispatches gun-toting vigilantes to patrol the border?

IN PERSON, TANTON hardly seems like a firebrand. He speaks softly, and carries himself with the reserved politeness of the small town doctor he was for 35 years. When I get to Petoskey at noon on a Monday, I find him in a Presbyterian church, where for the last 20 years his Great Books club has convened. Tanton briefly interrupts the discussion of Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* to introduce me, casually mentioning the magazine I write for, where I went to school and even what my major was. For a 72-year-old man, he sure knows his way around Google.

Tanton and his wife Mary Lou moved to Petoskey in 1964 after he finished medical school. The town's small clinic had an opening, and, particularly important, some of the most pristine wilderness in America was just minutes away. The couple quickly threw themselves into a variety of conservation causes.

A fundamental problem the nascent environmental movement identified was, in Tanton's words, that "the economic system is based on continual growth forever," which "in a finite world" isn't possible. The Tantons and others in the movement became convinced that something would have to give, and that it shouldn't be the planet. To avoid catastrophe, society would have to reconstitute itself to favor conservation over growth. It is a small-c conservative philosophy: What the cheerleaders of modernity called "progress," they called a plague.

In 1968, a Stanford biologist named

Paul Ehrlich made these ideas mainstream with his book, *The Population Bomb*. With terrifying certainty, Ehrlich argued that the exponential growth in population and the incremental growth in food could only mean one thing: mass famine. "The battle to feed all of humanity is over," the book begins. "In the 1970s ... hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death."

It was an instant sensation, turning "overpopulation" into a hot topic and landing Ehrlich repeatedly on "The Tonight Show." Tanton had been ahead of the curve. As early as the '50s, he avidly read reports from the Population Reference Bureau, and by the time Ehrlich's book was published, he and Mary Lou had already started work on the first Northern Michigan chapter of Planned Parenthood. "I believed in the multiplication tables," says Tanton. "Since I was a physician and could do something about birth control, it struck me that this was where I could make my contribution to the conservation movement."

Time hasn't been kind to Ehrlich's predictions: Due to a technological revolution in agriculture, there was no mass famine. World population growth has slowed considerably; the United Nations now predicts it could plateau by 2050. Many, if not most, professional demographers today are more worried about depopulation in the developed world.

But in many quarters, this "fixed pie" view persists, and the logic isn't necessarily flawed. Resources, particularly oil, are finite and the notion that technology will always be able to bail us out is dubious. Perhaps Ehrlich's predictions weren't wrong, just premature.

Tanton, whose worldview was forged in this intellectual milieu, is haunted by the spectre of an apocalypse just over the horizon, and the thought that he is one of a select few who see it coming. Sitting at his desk during one of our interviews, he reaches into a drawer, withdraws an electric metronome and flicks it on. As the device pulses at 135 beats per minute, he explains that each beat is a new birth (at the 1969 rate), and each new birth

requires resources: food, clothing, education. It's a trick he used when he gave talks on population in the '70s, and it's effective. His voice barely rises over the percussive onslaught, and after just 30 seconds you want to yell: "Make it stop!"

You get the sense that Tanton hears that beat inside his head all the time.

In 1969, Tanton started and chaired the population committee of his local Sierra Club chapter, and when Ehrlich and like-minded environmentalists founded the advocacy group Zero Population Growth (ZPG), he became one of its most active members, rising to its presidency in 1975. By then, the birthrate for Americans had declined below the replacement rate, but the American population was projected to keep growing. Tanton settled on the culprit: immigration.

The number of immigrants was still small by today's standards but had started to creep upwards, thanks in part to a 1965 immigration bill that instituted family reunification policies and did away with 40 years of quotas that heavily favored northern Europeans. Since immigrants had higher birthrates, reducing their numbers would allow the United States to achieve the zero population growth that had seemed a pipe dream only a few years earlier.

Tanton pushed for the Sierra Club to take a strong stand to reduce immigration, but the organization balked. He didn't have much more success with his fellow travelers at ZPG. Tanton chalks it up to fear of tackling a taboo subject, but it seems just as likely that they couldn't see why it mattered on which side of the Rio Grande someone was born. Today, ZPG, since renamed Population Connection, takes what its current president, John Seager, calls a "global approach," supporting female literacy, access to birth control and family-planning services in the developing world. If Tanton's concern is the health of the planet, why doesn't he subscribe to this view? He explains that reducing immigration will force countries like Mexico to confront their own population growth rates. "Each country," he says, "ought to try to match its popula-



John Tanton

tion to its resource base.”

Ultimately, Tanton realized it would be impossible to graft a new agenda onto an existing organization and resolved to found his own group. With Otis Graham and a couple of sympathetic board members poached from ZPG and several hundred thousand dollars in startup money from a wealthy Ehrlich devotee, Tanton founded FAIR on Jan. 2, 1979, with a mission to end illegal immigration and reduce legal immigration.

It was at this point that Tanton initiated the hyper-productive schedule he’d maintain for the next 29 years, spending Tuesday through Friday seeing patients at the clinic and working evenings, weekends and Mondays on immigration. While his physician’s life gave him the “ability to restore sight,” it was repetitive, he says. His activism was “abstract, focused on the long term and people called you bad names, but it was extremely stimulating.”

Tanton talks with such evident passion about the minutiae of organizing—the importance of correctly naming organizations, rules for recruiting effective board members—that it’s tempting to see his work on immigration as something like Oppenheimer’s work on the bomb, driven as much by the sheer intellectual challenge as by its ultimate goal. In an early memo to FAIR staffers, he explained his enjoyment of fundraising: “[I]t’s the ultimate chess game, in three dimensions, with the players all able to move themselves.”

The Tantons spent a year in D.C. working for FAIR between 1981 and 1982

(“crowded” is John’s assessment of the city) and their enthusiasm was contagious. One FAIR staffer wrote that the organization had “all the excitement and energy of a gold rush town.” When he returned to Petoskey, Tanton continued to grow the movement, helping to found the Center for Immigration Studies, NumbersUSA, Immigration Reform Law Institute and a journal, the *Social Contract Press*, which he has published out of his office for 16 years. He had some successes: FAIR membership grew to 50,000 by 1990 (today it claims 198,000 “members and supporters”), and it successfully lobbied for increased border security and harsher penalties in the two rounds of immigration legislation passed in 1986 and 1996.

But by the late ’90s, the Republican Party, reluctant to alienate the growing Latino electorate and under pressure from its corporate backers, largely dropped immigration from its agenda. Meanwhile, the earlier crackdowns that FAIR had pushed for failed to stanch the flow of immigrants. As day laborers started appearing in formerly lily-white suburbs across the country, backlash politics began to gain momentum below the mainstream political radar.

The problem, from an organizing standpoint, was that FAIR wasn’t in a good position to take advantage of this. “FAIR is a big problem,” says Peter Brimelow, an anti-immigration activist who runs the Web site VDARE.com, “because its natural constituency is conservative nationalists, but its operatives are basically liberal and centrist and terrified by Pat Buchanan.”

In fact, in the early days of the organization, the leadership was scared of its own members. The board resisted setting up local chapters for fear of who might show up and kept a tight lid on FAIR’s stationery, afraid some member would get their hands on it and write something “demagogic” that would discredit the group.

Tanton recognized this situation was untenable. Notes from a 1982 FAIR board meeting report that Tanton was “very concerned that FAIR has acquired only 4,000 real members in three years, and believes it is time to change our methods.” Crisscrossing the country, Tanton found little interest in his conservation-based arguments for reduced immigration, but kept hearing the same complaint. “I tell you what pisses me off,” Tanton recalls people saying. “It’s going into a ballot box and finding a ballot in a language I can’t read.” So it became clear that the language question had a lot more emotional power than the immigration question.”

Tanton tried to persuade FAIR to harness this “emotional power,” but the board declined. So in 1983, Tanton sent out a fundraising letter on behalf of a new group he created called U.S. English. Typically, Tanton says, direct mail garners a contribution from around 1 percent of recipients. “The very first mailing we ever did for U.S. English got almost a 10 percent return,” he says. “That’s unheard of.” John Tanton had discovered the power of the culture war.

The success of U.S. English taught Tanton a crucial lesson. If the immigration restriction movement was to succeed, it would have to be rooted in an emotional appeal to those who felt that their country, their language, their very identity was under assault. “Feelings,” Tanton says in a tone reminiscent of Spock sharing some hard-won insight on human behavior, “trump facts.”

More than anyone, Tanton served as the liaison between the “mainstream” anti-immigration movement, whose arguments were still rooted in population and job concerns, and its natural allies on the far right, who saw an epic struggle to maintain America’s national and racial character. He courted mainstream conservative donors, like the Scaife family, as well as the fringe Pioneer Fund, whose current president argues that blacks are genetically less intelligent than whites. He had the *Social Contract Press* translate, publish and promote *The Camp of the Saints*, a starkly racist apocalyptic novel about a wave of Indian

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immigrants overrunning France. In 1996, Tanton coauthored *The Immigration Invasion* with Wayne Lutton, who sits on the advisory board of a publication put out by the white nationalist Council of Conservative Citizens. Editor of the *Social Con-*

Southern Poverty Law Center reprinted the memo in a 2002 cover story in its magazine, documenting Tanton's various connections to hard right proponents of extremist racial views.

Tanton calls the "pants down" section

an invasive fungus called the *Phytophthora* has wreaked on the American chestnut tree.

In our interviews, Tanton returned time and again to the threat invasive species pose for the American ecosystem.

Tanton wants to harness the political power that comes from building bridges with outright racists, while dismissing the negative consequences that come from such partnerships.

tract Press since 1998, Lutton now occupies an office just a few feet from Tanton's.

In 1985, Tanton began convening an annual retreat for the immigration restriction movement's activists and writers, called WITAN, after *Witenagemot*, an Old English word for "wise council." The gatherings draw everyone from labor economist Vernon Briggs, a self-described "liberal Democrat," who worked on Texas union campaigns led by Caesar Chavez, to Jared Taylor, a white nationalist who publishes the journal *American Renaissance*. "Blacks and whites are different," Taylor wrote in a recent article on Hurricane Katrina. "When blacks are left entirely to their own devices, Western Civilization—any kind of civilization—disappears."

Taylor has attended the WITAN gatherings since their inception and says despite the divergent backgrounds of the participants, everyone is collegial out of respect for Tanton. "There's a real leadership quality in a man who can bring together so many different points of view to work together towards a common goal."

In a 1986 memo written to stimulate discussion at the upcoming retreat, Tanton mused on the effects of immigration on California, wondering if Latin American immigrants would "bring with them the tradition of the *mordida* (bribe)" and "the lack of involvement in public affairs." Later he fretted that Latinos' higher birth rates would lead to increased political power: "On the demographic question: perhaps this is the first instance in which those with their pants up are going to get caught by those with their pants down!"

Two years later, as U.S. English was campaigning for a referendum in Arizona, opponents leaked the memo to the press, prompting early supporters like Linda Chavez and Walter Cronkite to publicly sever their ties to the organization. The

"a throwaway line I should have thrown away." He bristles when I bring up the SPLC article, calling charges of racism a means of avoiding the real questions about immigrant quotas and policy enforcement. And he's so practiced at responding to this criticism, he easily swats away my repeated attempts to pin him down: Does he think white America is imperiled by the growth of the Latino population? How does he feel about the views of the white nationalists with whom he has allied himself?

"What's the definition of racism?" he snaps. "I have a different type of definition: taking race into account. They"—meaning groups like SPLC who criticize him—"are noticing it. They're saying that race is important to them."

Though he plays the victim, Tanton wants it both ways: harnessing the political power that comes from tapping into nativist grievances and building bridges with outright racists, while at the same time dismissing any of the negative consequences that might come from such partnerships. Perhaps Tanton shares the views of his allies, or perhaps he simply understands that if what people like Taylor euphemistically call "cultural" issues were taken out of the equation, there wouldn't be the same flood of phone calls to senators. "If the 12 million illegal immigrants in this country were all good-looking, English-speaking, white people," Taylor told me, "the opposition to illegal immigration would be considerably less."

AFTER I RETURN home, Tanton sends me a barrage of follow-up correspondences: a correction for the birthrate of India, which he'd misstated, a Paul Krugman column on immigration, and an article from a local conservation newsletter about the havoc

Reading his note, it occurred to me that what has tied together all of Tanton's activism—from setting up local preserves, to reducing highway billboards, to his 25 years in the anti-immigration movement—is a fear of contamination, a desire for some idealized notion of purity, a landscape and nation undefiled.


The irony is that on the one issue where he's directed the bulk of his effort, the means he's chosen haven't proved particularly effective. Thanks in large part to Tanton's efforts, over the last two decades the number of hours border guards spend on patrol has increased eightfold and the border patrol's budget has gone from \$151 million in 1986 to \$1.6 billion by 2002. It hasn't worked.

The problem is that nowhere else in the world do two countries with such disparate relative wealth share such a massive border. The ultimate way to reduce immigration is, as one writer once put it, to fix the "the poverty, population and distribution of wealth" in the countries that people are leaving.

That was John Tanton in the '70s, when he first started writing about immigration. Going through Tanton's early writing, I was struck by how much emphasis he put on the brain drain problem that immigration caused for developing nations, and the need to address underlying inequality between countries. With a liberal like me sitting in front of him, Tanton cogently and persuasively recites these arguments.

But conservative talk radio hosts, and Lou Dobbs viewers, and Minutemen along the Arizona border aren't focused right now on development, or reducing inequality. They want fences. They want enforcement. They want arrests.

So that's what John Tanton wants, too. ■

A photograph showing four women, identified as Hawaiian inmates, sitting in a row of red plastic chairs in a holding area. They are wearing olive green prison jumpsuits. The woman on the far left is looking down with her hands clasped. The woman next to her is looking at a small object in her hands. The woman in the middle is looking down, and the woman on the far right is looking towards the camera with a serious expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

From left: Hawaiian inmates Margarette Kealoha-Naki, Geraldine Kealoha, Patsy Kahaunaele and Deenie Tanele in a holding area outside the inmate visitation room at the Otter Creek Correctional Center in Wheelwright, Ky.

NO ROOM IN PRISON? SHIP 'EM OFF

Prisoners have become unwitting pawns in a lowest-bidder-gets-the-convict shuffle game

BY SILJA J.A. TALVI

IT HAS BEEN AN arduous, surreal journey for eight Hawaiian female prisoners sent to do their time on the mainland.

The plight of this group of women housed, most recently, in a prison in the small eastern Kentucky town of Wheelwright, would have escaped unnoticed, had it not been for the death of 43-year-old Sarah Ah Mau, on New Year's Eve 2005. Mau, serving a life sentence for second-degree murder, had been incarcerated since 1993 and had a shot at parole eligibility in August 2008.

She never got that chance. Instead she died of as-yet-unexplained "natural causes" after two days in critical condition—and a month after first complaining of severe gastrointestinal distress. Family members and fellow prisoners say that Ah Mau's pleas for medical care were ridiculed, downplayed or ignored by prison employees. As her stomach distended—and other body parts began to swell visibly—prisoners say that Ah Mau was fed castor oil and told to stop complaining unless she wanted to face disciplinary action.

What was Hawaiian resident Ah Mau doing in Kentucky in the first place? She was a commodity in an increasingly common practice: interstate prison transfers. Prison transfers, while not unusual, have a profound effect on inmates and family members alike. Children and spouses of "shipped" prisoners have little, if any, opportunity to see their loved ones. And due to special contracts with phone companies, telephone calls are prohibitively expensive. Prisoners themselves are sent to culturally unfamiliar facilities where they are supposed to be treated according to the laws and regulations granted by their home states—but rarely are. Home state law and prison regulation books are rarely available, making the prisoners' appeals or grievance requests even more difficult to file.

Most of the prisoners transferred out of their home states (which include but are not limited to Alabama, Colorado, North Dakota, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming) end up in privately run facilities in rural communities. Many of the guards hired for such prisons are under-trained, ill-prepared for their stressful work environments, and are paid "fast-food

restaurant wages,” according to Ken Kopczynski, executive director of Private Corrections Institute (PCI), a prison watchdog group.

“This is a major issue,” says Kopczynski. “The private prison companies have found a real niche for themselves.”

HAWAII REPRESENTS THE most extreme example of these practices because all of its transferred prisoners are sent to the mainland, and because all of those prisoners are sent to facilities run by just one private prison operator: Corrections Corporation of America (CCA).

Today, Hawaii leads the nation in interstate prisoner transfers. Nearly 2,000 prisoners—roughly half of the state’s adults convicted of felonies—are serving out their sentences in CCA-run prisons in Arizona, Kentucky, Mississippi and Oklahoma. Notably, 41 percent of the “shipped” prisoners have been native Hawaiian, although they represent only 20 percent of the state’s prison demographic.

Such prisoners have few recourses. A 1983 U.S. Supreme Court ruling based on a Hawaiian prisoner’s lawsuit protesting out-of-state relocation, *Olim v. Wai- nekona*, held that prisoners have no right to be confined in a particular prison, region or state. More recently, a 7th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling reinforced

and enhanced the Supreme Court decision by deciding that parents in prison had no right to insist on staying in their home state for the sake of their children. All subsequent legal challenges to out-of-state prison transfers have failed.

“These transfers are very problematic for a number of reasons,” notes David Fathi of the ACLU’s National Prison Project in Washington, D.C. “Visitation is all but impossible, and visitations are very important to prisoner mental health. [Visits] are usually correlated with positive prison adjustment behavior as well as decreased recidivism rates.”

A 1993 study focused on the recidivism rates of Hawaiian prisoners found that 90 percent of inmates sent to other states to do their time eventually returned to prison. Those incarcerated in their home state had recidivism rates ranging from 47 to 57 percent.

Studies like these notwithstanding, the situation in Kentucky isn’t likely to change in the near future. In fact, most of the Hawaiian women incarcerated in Kentucky have already experienced four transfers within the continental United States.

SARAH AH MAU was one of the 62 Hawaiian women who first arrived in Southern Texas in May 1997, at the Crystal City Correctional Center, 40 miles from the Mexico border. The facility

was in dire shape, and the heat extremes were completely unfamiliar to the prisoners, according to local news reports. But the prisoners, including Mau, seemed to do what they could to fit in. There, Mau gained the trust of the guards and facility officials, and was even allowed outside of facility walls on work detail.

In August 1998, 64 Hawaiian women were moved to the Central Oklahoma Correctional Facility (COCF) in McCloud, newly built by the Correctional Services Corporation. The women seemed to accept the situation because, at least, the living conditions were acceptable. That is, until February 2003, when the Oklahoma Department of Corrections announced its intent to purchase that facility. By late summer of that year, the Hawaiian women reported to the Hawaii Department of Public Safety (DPS) that the overall operations and security of COCF had gone downhill. According to reports received by Kat Brady, coordinator of the Community Alliance on Prisons in Honolulu, the situation involved disgruntled unionized staff, lack of programs, sick leave abuse and “staff having sexual relationships with inmates.”

The Hawaii DPS decided to move the women to another facility. On Aug. 1, 2004, the 64 Hawaiian women were transferred to the Brush Correctional Facility (BCF) in Colorado. There, according to Brady, things went from bad to worse. At BCF, the women were discouraged by leaky rooftops, broken plumbing, lack of drug treatment programs and inadequate medical care.

BCF prison employees were hired quickly and, as it turned out, without the requisite background checks. Allegations of sexual harassment and abuse were soon to follow. Initially dismissed by GRW internal investigators, many of the charges turned out to be true. Not only had five convicted felons been hired as staff members, but four prison employees were ultimately charged and convicted of criminal offenses ranging from running a cigarette smuggling ring to sexually abusing female prisoners. BCF’s prison warden resigned and was later indicted as an accomplice in one of the sexual misconduct cases.

It was time to send the women somewhere else. That is, anywhere but back home, where the state’s sole female prison was packing three women into cells designed to accommodate one to two

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prisoners.

“Our women have been moved around like chess pieces,” says Brady, who has stayed in close contact with many of the female prisoners from Hawaii. “Most of these women would be better served in community programs to directly address their needs: drug addiction, PTSD resulting from various forms of abuse and anger management.” Instead, the Hawaii DPS settled on the CCA-run Otter Creek Correctional Center.

LOCATED IN THE mountains of Eastern Kentucky, Wheelwright (population 1,048) was once a successful coal-mining town with a Nashville Steel plant that employed 3,000 people. That all changed in 1970, when the plant shut down; the town quickly dwindled in both population and resident income. Building a prison in 1993 on the site of a former coal camp seemed to be a great solution to this town’s intractable problem of unemployment. Indeed, when CCA bought the facility in 1999, the corporation quickly became the town’s biggest employer.

Private prisons know the advantages of moving into economically devastated rural communities: generous tax incentives, low construction costs and a cheap labor market are key among them. Once built, the private prison companies strive to keep their facilities at maximum capacity.

“Whenever these bed counts go below 10 to 20 percent of maximum capacity, these corporations can’t make

it. They *need* to import prisoners,” says Frank Smith, field director for PCI.

And that’s what CCA did with Otter Creek, initially bringing in male inmates from Indiana to fill the available cells. In July 2001, the Indiana prisoners staged a nine-hour riot, which was brought under control only after 100 outside law enforcement officers had been brought in to subdue the prisoners. By 2005, Indiana had transferred the last of its state prisoners out of the facility, after which CCA converted Otter Creek into a 656-bed women’s prison.

Past riots weren’t the concern of Hawaiian authorities—CCA was offering a great deal. According to the contract, each inmate would cost the state only \$56 per day—compared to an average of \$108 in Hawaii. (According to Smith’s research, costs are kept this low at Otter Creek because entry-level guards make \$7.60 per hour.) CCA also agreed that Hawaii could send out a new group of higher-security “close-custody” inmates. Approximately 40 such prisoners were promptly shipped out.

Today, Otter Creek houses 120 Hawaiian women alongside Kentucky state prisoners. Half of the Hawaiian women are serving crystal methamphetamine-related sentences, and most of them are incarcerated on nonviolent charges. Ninety-five percent of these women are mothers, and according to Brady, not a single woman has gotten a visit from a child or other family member since the

September 2005 transfer. Collect phone calls from the prison to Hawaii can run more than 60 cents per minute.

Since arriving at Otter Creek, women at the facility have complained consistently about cold temperatures in cells; loss of property during their transfer; racial and sexual harassment; bizarre medical care and commissary hours (at 2 to 4 a.m.); and “drinking” water that has caused widespread diarrhea and vomiting. In separate letters and phone calls, prisoners have echoed each other’s concerns of being threatened with administrative segregation if they complain about medical conditions.

Correspondence from Otter Creek prisoners—received by the Community Alliance on Prisons—has pointed to at least two other serious medical situations in the recent past.

In one situation, a Hawaiian inmate, who asked to remain nameless, was coughing up blood and asked for medical assistance repeatedly. When she was finally seen by the medical unit at the prison, she was given a nasal moisturizer and told she had a sinus infection. The prisoner’s condition worsened, and she was eventually rushed to the Hazard Regional Medical Center—in leg shackles and at gunpoint. The inmate had to have emergency surgery; one lung had completely filled with blood. Prison officials ignored a follow-up appointment scheduled by the surgeon until Brady intervened on the woman’s behalf.

Another female inmate, who also requested anonymity, told prison staff about severe chest, arm and leg pain for several months, only to be told that she would be placed in administrative segregation if she continued to complain. When she was eventually taken to the hospital in critical condition, a triple heart bypass surgery had to be performed.

DPS did not respond to a request for an interview on the medical care and general conditions facing state prisoners at Otter Creek. The state agency announced earlier this year that it was sending its own investigative medical team to Kentucky to determine the actual cause of Ah Mau’s illness and death, but has yet to release its findings.

“This is inhumane,” Brady insists. He and others have called for an independent investigation, stressing that Ah Mau’s death is unlikely to be the last tragedy to befall this group of female prisoners. ■

Hey Millennials, Debt Becomes You

Twenty-somethings face a life of looming loans

BY MISCHA GAUS

THE CHILDREN OF BABY boomers are the new debtor class. Buckling under a heavy weight of debt, new workers step into an economy of low-wage and contingent work, a combination that makes the basics of adulthood increasingly unattainable.

"We grew up in the Regan era where everything was fake, voodoo economics, and we're not seeing the connections," says Anya Kamenetz, author of *Generation Debt: Why Now Is a Terrible Time to be Young*. "I don't think we can continue treating people as disposable, not providing them with health care or the means to save."

Educational debt is the most visible—but not the only—barrier to the well-being of the "millennial generation," roughly defined as Americans born after 1978. Every gate on the way to middle-class life is now tougher to unlock. Mortgages, health insurance expenses, car maintenance, child care and tax loads for two-income families have all ballooned.

The accumulating stress on this generation is spilling over—not yet into the street, as it did in France in late March, but into some emerging forms of collective action.

Owing 'til you're old and gray

The familiar combination of summer work, a part-time job during the school year and a little help from home doesn't begin to cover today's college costs. To afford one year at a public university, about \$11,000, students earning minimum wage would have to work full-time year-round.

"Students are in a pretty deep financial hole," says Luke Swarthout, higher education associate for the State PIRGs, which advocate on a variety of consumer, environmental and good-government issues. The Federal Reserve says graduates now shoulder three times more debt than a decade ago, after adjusting for inflation. Undergraduates now average almost \$20,000 in debt, with a quarter taking on more than \$25,000, according to Robert Shireman, director of the Project on Student Debt, a Berkeley-based think tank.

"They end up still paying off their loans about the time when they're figuring out how to help with their own children's education," Shireman says. Some never emerge from their chasm of liabilities. The Supreme Court recently decided that retirees' Social Security checks can be garnished for old student debts, and changes to bankruptcy law last year make it nearly impossible to discharge educational loans.

For students who approach their working lives seeking returns beyond pure remuneration, rising debt loads postpone basic decisions. Pam Morus, 29, spends about 10 percent of her income every month keeping up with \$35,000 in student loans. A music therapist in Chicago, she received no grants during her five-year program at Eastern Michigan University. She'd like to purchase a home and start a family soon, but unless she finds a partner who brings in significantly more income, it is impossible. "I barely make enough money to pay my rent," she says.

Even with a scholarship to American University's law school, Julia Graff, 28, started her career as a staff attorney at the Delaware ACLU last year facing \$80,000 in debt. She anticipates paying lenders until she retires.

Graff knew her ambition to pursue a nonprofit career meant she would forgo luxuries. But her debt-to-income ratio means trips to university dental clinics and taking on odd jobs like tutoring and translating Spanish.

"I live paycheck to paycheck," Graff says. "Eventually I'm not going to want to live like I did when I was 18."

And when lives don't match up with debt schedules, the strain can be severe. After finishing community college, Mandy Minor, 30, bounced around the University of South Florida before settling on business administration. She graduated five years ago, picking up \$60,000 in consumer and student debt along with her diploma.

Minor owns a small writing and design firm with her husband, and had a daughter five months ago. She pays \$400 a month just to maintain her debt load, and has given up on buying a house. She

worries how to provide health insurance once her daughter no longer qualifies for Florida's state-provided care.

"It bothers me on a fundamental level that we even have to worry a little about how our daughter will receive medical care," she says. "It sickens me, and I know I'm not alone."

Minor says some of her credit-card bills predate her college years. "I think sending high school students offers of credit should be illegal," she says.

Taken together, such individual struggles illuminate the consequences of punitive political decisions. After all, student debt is intimately linked to government actions, like Congress' decision to boost interest rates to 6.8 percent for undergraduate Stafford loans, both new and old.

Ensuring economic security is not solely an issue of self-interest for young people. Because higher education remains the most important factor for predicting economic success—and thus an opportunity to bridge inequality—it is a social justice concern as well.

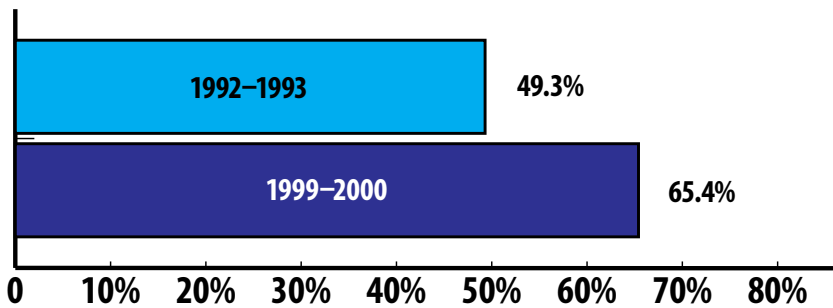
Last year, Yale students held a sit-in to demand financial aid reform. Within a week, they won a pledge from the university that families making less than \$45,000 would no longer pay tuition. Yale was just catching up: The Ivies have embarked on a game of financial-aid chicken, fighting to see who can boost higher the amount families can earn before footing college costs. Currently, that figure stands at \$50,000 at the University of Pennsylvania and \$60,000 at Harvard.

Struggling for a living wage

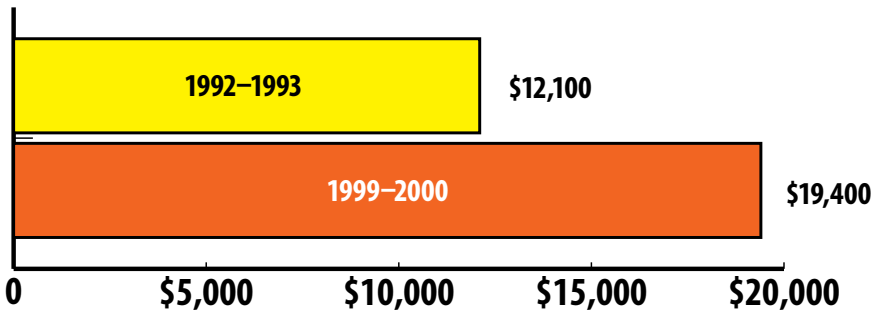
Once they've graduated, however, what really staggers young people is a one-two punch: saddled with loans, students have a hard time finding a stable job that will actually support them. Steady productivity gains have been swallowed by capital, stagnating wages for young people. A Federal Reserve survey says the median net worth of households under 35 rose just 1.3 percent in the last decade after inflation.

"Management has pulled a fast one," says Kamenetz. "They've gotten people to accept intangible benefits instead of old,

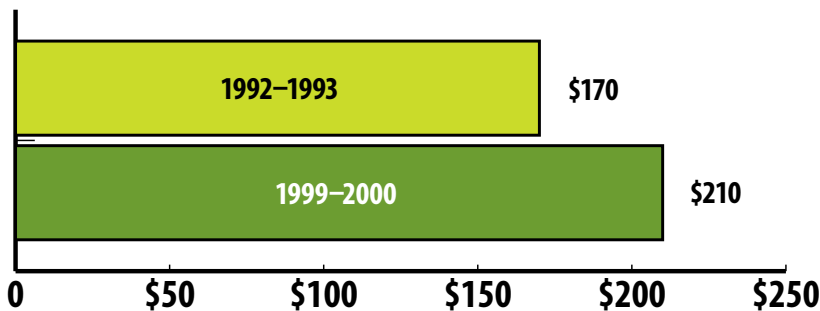
PERCENTAGE OF BACHELOR DEGREE RECIPIENTS WHO BORROWED:



AVG. AMOUNT BORROWED:



AVG. MONTHLY LOAN PAYMENT FOR RECIPIENTS, 1 YEAR AFTER GRADUATION:



actual benefits. We've all sort of followed this idea that we're all free agents." Flexibility and contingent labor have replaced the certainty of bargaining agreements and pensions.

And contrary to media narratives about consumers run amok, foolish spending is not the root of most families' financial problems, writes Harvard Law professor Elizabeth Warren in her book, *The Two-Income Trap: Why Middle-Class Mothers and Fathers Are Going Broke*. Credit card bills are higher now, but consumer spending between this generation and the last balances out—for instance, as more is spent on airline tickets, less is spent on tobacco.

So where do young people turn to confront their economic plight? They are channeling some energy into workplace

organizing. Retail workers at Borders and Starbucks have employed minority unionism, which initially doesn't seek contracts or bargaining units but builds a base of power through action by less than half the workers. Workers across the country trade information about corporate policies online, coordinating efforts between stores and sniping at overpaid executives.

The underlying model is nothing new: Unions like United Farm Workers have used it for decades. But it could fit young people in hard-to-organize retail work, says Kate Bronfenbrenner, director of labor education research at Cornell University.

"Young people don't feel as vulnerable as older workers because they're not going to be in this job forever," she says. "They are more willing to take risks."

Minority unionism could challenge giant chain stores, she says, if unions commit to long campaigns and follow a social-unionism approach that brings the community behind the drive. The story-book example is the L.A. Justice for Janitors Campaign, which in the early '90s saw the flowering of a community-union partnership that placed moral concerns alongside economic ones. However, these are difficult, expensive campaigns in high-turnover jobs exceed the reach of any sympathetic union local. Critics see minority unionism as a half-cocked attempt to engage young workers.

"We had industrial unions when we had industrial manufacturing. Now we have a new way of working that is much more short-term and mobile," says Sara Horowitz, president of Working Today, a New York-based advocacy group that provides insurance and other benefits for contingent—and often young—laborers. "Unions have evolved since the days of Moses and Exodus, and there's no reason to think they're not going to evolve again."

Working Today counts 16,000 contingent workers in its ranks. Although its benefits are limited to workers in New York, it lobbies nationally to fill gaps like health care and retirement savings for the 30 percent of the workforce it estimates work independently.

Millennials are also warming to another old tactic for addressing their grievances. They are increasingly appearing at the polls, with half of voters under 30 turning out in 2004, their largest showing in 14 years. Sustaining this interest, though, would require reversing a long-standing trend: Youth voting rates have been declining since 1972.

The emerging generation's beliefs could offer an opportunity for reshaping the political discourse. Recent studies by the liberal New Politics Institute and a University of Maryland public policy center suggest millennials are more likely to identify as progressive than any other age group.

But unless they find political avenues to channel their discontent, they may soon find themselves screaming in the streets like their French counterparts.

"They have different lives than their parents did, a different set of economic opportunities," Horowitz says. "It's time for them to talk about what they need." ■

MISCHA GAUS is a Chicago-based freelancer who writes regularly for *In These Times*.

How Do You Define Security?

If Democrats want to win in November, they need a better plan

BY DAVID MOBERG

IN CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS THIS fall, Republicans hope voters' decisions will be made strictly on local issues. But Democratic strategists increasingly realize that their hopes for victory hinge on their ability to make the fall election a national referendum on Bush, Congressional Republicans and whatever alternative Democrats choose to present.

The reasons are clear: Nationally, the Republicans are tied to Bush, whose approval ratings are tanking on everything from Iraq to the economy. This even extends to his political trump card: Half of Americans now disapprove of his handling of terrorism. And according to a mid-March national poll, on a "generic" congressional ballot, voters prefer Democrats to Republicans, 55 percent to 39 percent—the largest lead Democrats have enjoyed in such polls since the 1982 midterm election. Republicans are losing ground even among former Bush supporters and in traditionally "red" regions, such as the South. As polling analyst Ruy Teixeira writes, "views about Bush are nationalizing the election in the Democrats' favor."

And yet, while public sentiment may be favoring the Democrats, race-by-race analyses of the open '06 seats show Republicans maintaining control of the House and, to a lesser degree, the Senate. These incongruous predictions reflect the power of incumbency and the ways in which Republicans have created a lopsided lock on federal government.

Despite the odds, Democrats can win. But it won't be enough simply to capitalize on a growing public sense that Bush is "incompetent," as polls suggest and Democratic leaders have reiterated with relentless joy. As Michael Dukakis pathetically demonstrated in his 1988 presidential race against Bush's father, Democrats can't win simply by claiming greater competence.

The beginnings of a plan

The problem with the Bush administration is not incompetence, but core policies and strategies. The Iraq invasion



failed because it was a flawed strategy, not because of incompetent execution. The immediate post-invasion administration failed in large part because the Bush administration imposed a fundamentally misguided, ideological program of neo-liberal privatization.

Democrats need an alternative vision. They've been reluctant to produce it, excusing this inaction by arguing that Newt Gingrich's Contract With America, which gave Republicans national coherence and a landslide victory in 1994, debuted late in the campaign. In late March however, they made a start towards defining their alternative with a national security plan dubbed "Real Security."

"Real Security," however, is a cautious, unsatisfying compromise between political expediency and serious strategy, hampered by real divisions among Democrats. The plan does include worthy initiatives: accelerated control over "loose nuclear materials;" energy independence

(focused on efficiency and renewable fuels, not nuclear power); better homeland security (fully implementing the 9/11 Commission proposals); better support for soldiers, veterans and domestic first responders; and more use of international alliances to eliminate conditions that foster terrorism.

The Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank, concluded that "the strategy includes concrete proposals that would make the country safer and go far beyond what the Bush administration has been willing to do."

But Democrats, anxious to show themselves as tough (but smart), haven't broken with Bush's military strategy for national security. Rather than call for a complete revamping of the military budget, including deep cuts in irrelevant cold war weapons, nuclear bombs and missile defense—as the Center for Defense Information, a military reform advocacy group, has advocated—the Democrats are

arguing for an expanded military. And “Real Security” continues to emphasize the idea that the United States must be willing to “project” military power—that is, to intervene or threaten to intervene in other countries. In short, the plan fails to offer a new global political and economic strategy that provides real power and real security.

“Most high-ranking Democratic officials continue to believe that a ‘muscular’ approach to national security is their best bet for returning to power,” writes William D. Hartung, a fellow of the World Policy Institute at the New School in New York. “But trying to beat the Republicans at their own game—fear-mongering in the service of ever-higher military budgets—is a losing proposition.”

Most glaringly, other than calling Bush to account for manipulating pre-war intelligence, the Democratic strategy offers no alternative on Iraq. With Bush saying that he intends to keep troops in Iraq at least until the end of his term, Democrats need to call for a timetable for complete withdrawal, with, at most, a residual armed force temporarily remaining in Kuwait. In early April even Sen. John Kerry joined ranks with Democrats like Rep. John Murtha in calling for timetables: immediate withdrawal if Iraqis do not form a government by May 15, and withdrawal of all combat troops from Iraq by year’s end if they do.

Setting such deadlines makes sense both domestically and as foreign policy. Even though only 30 percent of people polled in a March NBC/*Wall Street Journal* survey favored immediate withdrawal, 61 percent disapproved of Bush’s handling of Iraq and 50 percent said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate favoring withdrawing all troops in the next 12 months. But congressional Democrats are divided on which of the flawed alternatives to the current Iraq quagmire is the best. Many are worried about appearing “weak” on defense. And overall, they prefer to argue that Iraq has been a dangerous distraction from the real tasks of homeland security.

Creating real security

Ultimately, however, Democrats’ success will also depend on how they expand the notion of “real security” to include the growing economic insecurity of working-class and middle-class Americans. This was a major theme of a March conference

organized by former Sen. John Edwards at the University of North Carolina, and it is the thesis of a forthcoming book, *The Great Risk Shift*, by Yale political scientist Jacob Hacker.

According to Hacker and Elizabeth Warren of Harvard Law School, both of whom took part in Edwards’ conference, American families, from the poor to middle-class, face increased exposure to economic risk. Employers and government have compounded their problems by shifting responsibility for dealing with those risks to individual families. This massive transfer of risk has become, Hacker said, “the defining feature of American political economy.”

The result has been catastrophic: personal bankruptcies have gone up fivefold in the last 25 years. Rates of job loss are up and security of job tenure down. As individual incomes have stagnated, especially for men, families have relied more on both women’s earnings and on skyrocketing personal debt. Despite higher household earnings, these families have less discretionary income because the fixed costs of living, such as mortgages, childcare and medical care, have gone up so rapidly.

During the same period the risks of disruptions to family incomes from events such as layoffs have also tripled, Warren reports, then doubled again as both husband and wife face the risk. Family and workplace conflicts have become more economically threatening, as reported in a study from the University of California Hastings College of the Law titled “One Sick Child Away From Being Fired.”

Health-related costs are a major part of the great risk shift. Growing numbers of families lack health insurance: Over a two-year period, one third of non-elderly families go without insurance for some period of time. The out-of-pocket expenses are rising even for those with insurance. And since insurance is largely tied to employment, it often provides little help for the most seriously ill. In recent years, half of all personal bankruptcies have resulted from medical expenses, and in three-fourths of those cases, the families had health insurance.

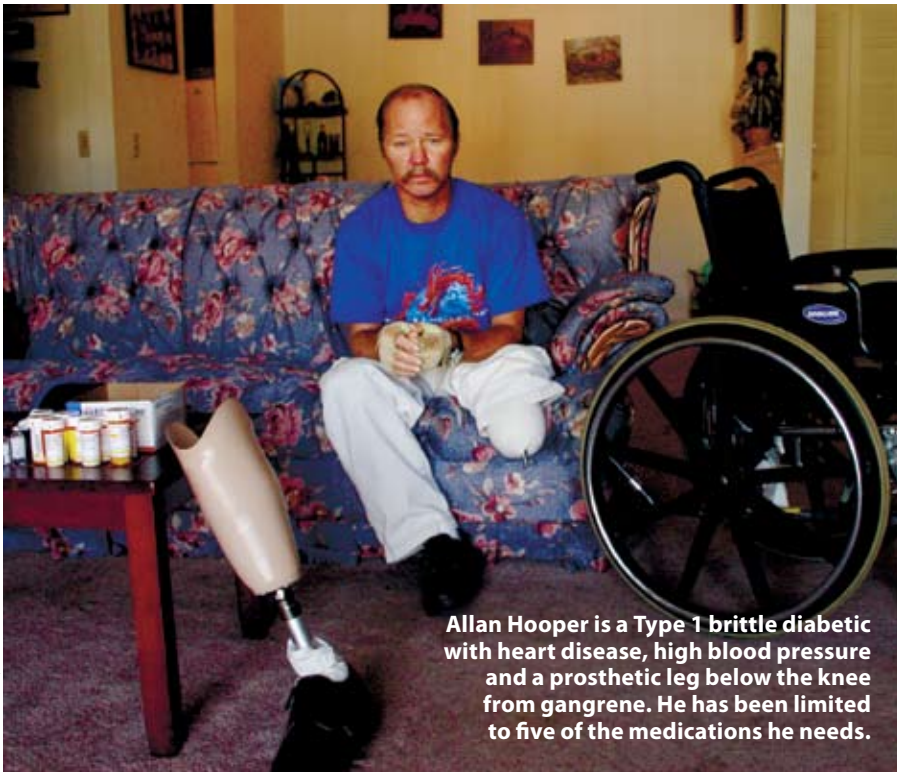
By now, everyone recognizes that in the past quarter century the rich have indeed gotten much richer at the expense of everyone else. And the chances for people to move up economically have de-

clined. But Hacker found that the chance that family incomes will fluctuate sharply from year to year has increased even faster than income inequality. This rising insecurity afflicts middle-class, white, two-earner families, but it takes a greater toll on women, minorities, single-parent families and low-wage workers.

If Democrats want to provide the “real security” that matters to most Americans, they must offer protection against these growing risks. That means providing better social insurance: universal health insurance, wage insurance, improved unemployment insurance and expanded public pension programs. It means guaranteeing free college education or equivalent technical training for everyone. And it means advancing a new strategy to regulate the global economy, a strategy that involves not only helping people adjust to global economic changes but ensuring that the benefits of globalization flow primarily to working people in all countries.

No doubt congressional Democrats will fail to embrace programs on the scale that Americans really need, especially when many of them voted for a Republican bill that punishes people who fall into personal bankruptcy. But consensus is growing among Democrats that global economic agreements must include labor and environmental protections. And new legislation in Massachusetts to provide health insurance for everyone in the state, while far from ideal, means it’s plausible that national Democrats will talk about universal health coverage. Promises of a higher minimum wage, better unemployment insurance, protection of social security and more college and pre-school educational aid should be easy winners for Democrats, especially if they couple paying for them with repealing tax breaks for the very rich.

Republicans still tout their “ownership society.” But most Americans want a sense of security in their lives—security that ironically will give them a chance to take creative risks. Hacker reports that a survey last year found that 29 percent of Americans valued the opportunity to make money over stability, while 62 percent favored economic security. Clearly this is what the vast majority of Americans want, even if they’re not always sure their government can deliver it. It’s the Democrats’ opportunity to make the case that they can deliver “real security” in all its meanings. ■



Allan Hooper is a Type 1 brittle diabetic with heart disease, high blood pressure and a prosthetic leg below the knee from gangrene. He has been limited to five of the medications he needs.

Careless Industry

How Corporate America perpetuates the health care crisis

BY DAVID SIROTA

LET'S BE HONEST—VERY FEW political operatives, politicians or pundits actually want to explore the real-life, day-to-day economic challenges facing the American people, because to explore them would ultimately force us to admit that our entire venerated political system is totally corrupt.

Take this idiotically simple question that is almost never asked in the normal course of this country's political debate: Why do we hear so much about how well-off America is, yet our country has the highest number of uninsured citizens in the industrialized world?

Why isn't that question asked? Because you can't answer it honestly without exploring how Corporate America has bought off enough politicians to make sure our government helps corporations perpetuate this travesty.

I'm not naïve. I know that corporations

exist for one reason and one reason only: the relentless, single-minded pursuit of profit, no matter who gets shafted. That is their stated purpose in a capitalist society, and that's fine. But in our country, corporations aren't supposed to pursue this purpose in a vacuum, unchecked, unregulated, unopposed. There is supposed to be a counterweight, a government separate from Big Business whose job is to prevent the corporate profit motive from destroying society. That government once passed laws protecting the environment, so the profit motive wouldn't end up eliminating breathable air. That government once protected workers, so the profit motive wouldn't result in Americans toiling in sweatshops. And that government once demanded better wages, so the profit motive wouldn't result in a race to the bottom for poverty-level paychecks. But that government, as we all know, is long gone.

Our government has been the victim of a hostile takeover. Over the last thirty years, Corporate America has applied its most effective business tactics to the task of purchasing the one commodity that's not supposed to be for sale: American democracy.

To fight back, I decided to write a guidebook to help people see exactly how politicians' lies, myths and half-truths justify government policies that allow Corporate America to rip us off. That book, *Hostile Takeover: How Big Money & Corruption Conquered our Government—and How We Take It Back*, is meant to provide a window into the one fact that the corporate lobbyists and their tools in the government don't want you to know: that the problems undermining America on a daily basis can be fixed if our government starts representing the interests of ordinary people.

To give you a flavor of the book, consider this excerpt that analyzes the health care crisis—a particularly newsworthy issue considering the recent headlines about Massachusetts moving toward a universal health care system. The Bay State's moves are certainly controversial—especially the steep mandates on uninsured individuals and the desperate efforts to protect the health insurance industry. But they show that the issue is now simmering to a boil not only in Washington, but in state capitals all over America.

THE INSTITUTE OF Medicine was created by Congress in 1970 to be the chief, nonpartisan adviser to the federal government on all matters related to health care. That's why the announcement it made in 2004 was so stunning. "Lack of health insurance causes roughly 18,000 unnecessary deaths every year in the United States," the Institute said. Therefore, "By 2010, everyone in the United States should have health insurance ... [The Institute] urges the president and Congress to act immediately by establishing a firm and explicit plan to reach this goal."

The health care system, which is supposed to preserve and protect human life, is allowing thousands of Americans to die every year, and America's top experts were sounding the alarm.

So how is it that government and media have settled into complacency when

the system is so bad for so many? The status quo pays big dividends.

In 2003, HMOs nearly doubled their profits from just a year before, adding \$10 billion to their bottom line. That year, top executives at the 11 largest health insurers made a combined \$85 million in one year. In the first three quarters of 2004, HMO profits increased by another 33 percent. The sheer numbers behind these profits are staggering: In 2004 alone, the four biggest health insurance companies reported \$100 billion in revenues. That's \$273 million a day, every day, 365 days of the year.

That's the kind of cash that allowed the health industry to spend more than \$300 million on lobbying in 2003, and another \$300 million on campaign contributions to politicians since 2000. Their agenda is pretty simple: stop any proposals to curb health care profiteering by private insurance companies.

To make its arguments, the industry buys off high-profile ex-politicians and makes them its spokespeople. Take Marc Racicot—one of Corporate America's favorite tools. This former governor of Montana left public service to become an Enron lobbyist, then became chairman of the Republican National Committee, and then headed President Bush's re-election

campaign. Now, looking once again to cash in, Racicot has taken a job as the public shill for the insurance industry's chief lobbying group in Washington, D.C.

But most Americans have not. According to a nationwide ABC/*Washington Post* poll in 2003, "Americans by a 2-1 margin, 62-32 percent, prefer a universal

Corporate America has applied its most effective business tactics to the task of purchasing the one commodity that's not supposed to be for sale: American democracy.

His direct access to the president will undoubtedly serve him well in that role.

OLD PROS IN Washington know one of the easiest ways to kill a good idea is to invoke Americans' fear of a slow, bloated government bureaucracy. In 2004, White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan attacked President Bush's opponents for wanting "a government-run system, where the taxpayers will pick up more of the tab" for health care. Republican National Committee Chairman Ed Gillespie, previously head of a health industry lobbying firm, declared that "the American people have rejected a government-run system of national health care."

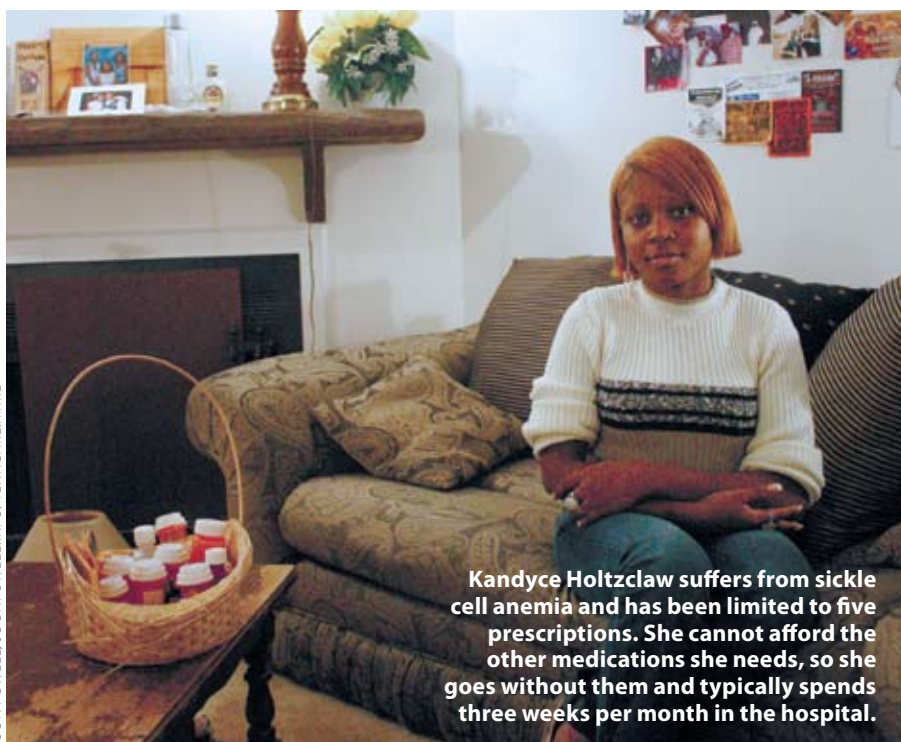
health insurance program over the current [private] employer-based system."

Doctors, too, are chiming in with support for universal health insurance. In 2003, the prestigious—and conservative—*Journal of the American Medical Association* published a proposal for government-sponsored universal health care that was endorsed by more than 8,000 physicians (including two former surgeon generals).

Even parts of the business community support government intervention. For instance, Ford, GM and Chrysler all endorsed Canada's system, where the government funds health care for all citizens. Similarly, a poll of Michigan small businesses found that 63 percent supported creating a universal health care system, even if it required tax increases. The health insurance industry, you see, is not only gouging patients—it is gouging employers who provide health care benefits to workers.

Still, everywhere you turn there is a politician deriding any proposal to use the power of government to expand health care. "When government writes the checks when it comes to health care, they start writing the rules when it comes to health care," said President Bush during the 2004 campaign. "And when they start writing the rules when it comes to health care, they start making decisions for you when it comes to your health care, and they start making decisions for the doctors when it comes to health care."

Sadly, the media reports this drivel with little question, even though it would only take one question to deflate Bush's entire argument: If "government-run" health care is inherently bad, as he and the health care industry claim, wouldn't Americans hate Medicare? The answer is



Kandyce Holtzclaw suffers from sickle cell anemia and has been limited to five prescriptions. She cannot afford the other medications she needs, so she goes without them and typically spends three weeks per month in the hospital.

JOON POWELL, JOONPOWELL.INFO/TENNCARE.HTM

yes, but they don't—the program is widely considered one of the most popular in American history.

IN 2004, SENATE Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) was asked whether America could afford to provide health care to all of its citizens. As the first surgeon to head the Senate, some were hoping Frist would address the situation optimistically. Instead, he said, "it is impossible to get everybody covered," citing the fact that his home state was "going bankrupt" trying to achieve universal coverage.

The mind reels at how someone like Frist could claim the government does not have enough money to deal with health care. His comment, after all, came just a few years after his family was forced to pay \$1.7 billion in criminal and civil fines for trying to rip off Medicare while running the nation's largest for-profit hospital chain.

The issue came up again in the 2004 presidential debate when President Bush attacked Sen. John Kerry's universal health care proposal. Kerry "wants every-

body to be able to buy into the same plan that senators and congressmen get," Bush said derisively, as if the idea of having us commonfolk get the same health care as the elite was too disgusting to consider.

According to a study by top experts in 2005, "the United States wastes more on [private] health-care bureaucracy than it would cost to provide health care to all its uninsured." As the World Health Organization noted, 15 cents of every dollar Americans spend on private health insurance goes to "administrative" expenses. That is a euphemism for everything from filling out and processing insurance paperwork to padding HMO executives' salaries. By contrast, when the government spends money on public health care programs like Medicare, those "administrative" expenses only consume about 4 cents of every dollar.

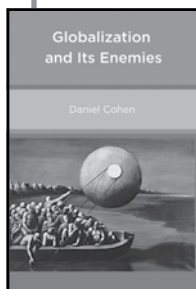
A universal system in which the government is the single payer for everyone's health care would eliminate most of that bureaucracy and redundancy, save Americans a huge amount of money and still be able to extend high-quality coverage to everyone. For instance, the uni-

versal health care proposal put forward by 8,000 doctors in 2003 would save roughly \$200 billion a year. That almost matches a report during the same year showing that if American administrative costs were limited to Canadian levels, our country would save more than \$280 billion a year.

The only industries universal health care would hurt are the big HMOs and drug companies. In the current everyone-for-themselves system, they can dictate high prices because citizens are not organized into large blocks that can negotiate lower prices. People are divided, and so the health care industry conquers.

IN 2004, THE nonpartisan group Families USA was asked to testify before a House committee on the issue of health care.

But of course, the hearing was only a formality, really. Congress had no intention of listening too much to anyone who didn't come bearing a very large check. Still, the political goons in the employ of the big insurance companies understand that in even the most mundane situa-



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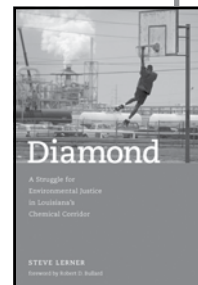
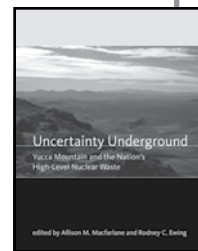
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tions in Washington, the truth must be squelched at all costs. So it was no surprise when amidst the boring proceedings, fireworks started.

Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Mich.) apparently had heard enough about the health care crisis. So in the middle of the testimony by Ron Pollack, Families USA's executive director, Rogers snapped. "Just so I understand your organization," he said, "you support rationing, limited drug use, pharmaceutical use?"

It was a nice tribute to McCarthyism—couch an outrageous, unfounded accusation in a seemingly innocent question. The Families USA representative denied the charge. But it didn't stop there. Like a drooling pit bull snarling at a passerby, Rogers barked, "You support rationing health care for American citizens and limiting the ability for them to have access to pharmaceutical treatment in order to keep costs down."

Rogers might well have screamed "Communist!" had his time not run out. Why was he so aggressively hurling out deceptive accusations? He was just doing the job he'd been paid to do: Over the previous four years, Rogers found himself in possession of more than a quarter million dollars of campaign contributions from the health care industry. Rogers is just a cog in the industry's spin machine—a \$275,000 cog, but a cog nonetheless. That machine has been effective over the years in one of its most important goals: tarring any government health care initiative as the precursor to "rationing." So when advocates of government involvement make an appearance anywhere in Washington, the industry's hired goons can be counted on to shout them down before any ugly truth gets out there.

We are led to believe that because we have a private, for-profit health care system, we don't have health care rationing in America. But the whole point of most health insurance companies is to ration care, limiting the amount of coverage their patients get in order to save cash. Even the Supreme Court admits that. In 2000, the justices issued a unanimous opinion noting that the existence of HMOs means "there must be rationing and inducement to ration" care. The ultraconservative *Washington Times* admitted that the court made very clear that "it is the point of any HMO to ration care and within its prerogative to delay tests,

avert expensive consultations or refuse experimental care."

Remember, this isn't just rationing of non-critical health services. In 2001, for instance, the *Sacramento Business Journal* uncovered evidence that senior citizens who were receiving cancer treatment were being priced out of

auto insurance companies can charge you. It's clearly not fair for the government to force you to acquire something, yet allow companies to charge you whatever they want for it. It's equally true that some services—even if not officially mandated by the government—are absolutely essential to life: electricity, for in-

The same politicians in Washington who preach about the "culture of life" and "moral values" are too addicted to health care industry cash to care about people who can't afford to see a doctor.

their chemotherapy by an HMO that had arbitrarily decided to raise its rates. "For many seniors on fixed incomes the choice is to die or take a shot at physical survival and life in poverty," wrote the magazine. "This is how the free market rations healthcare. ... We have the specter of an HMO effectively turning out the elderly to die."

Beyond just the sheer corruption and deception of all this is the insulting pretense that these politicians actually care that health care rationing is going on in the first place. They say they oppose a government-funded health care system because it would result in rationing, yet they are the very same people who actually write the policies that force the government to ration.

The truth is, government programs are as good or bad at providing health care as they are given adequate money to do their jobs.

THE HEALTH INSURANCE crisis is serious and long-standing, but there are some simple approaches to getting it fixed that don't require huge giveaways to the big insurers.

One solution is a universal health care system where the government is the single payer. A shorter name for this is "Medicare for Everybody." As economist Paul Krugman notes, "The great advantage of universal, government-provided health insurance is lower costs." Medicare, Krugman notes, "has much lower administrative costs than private insurance."

Another solution is to regulate health insurance prices like any other utility. Because you are legally required to have car insurance, most states regulate the rates

stance. And in those cases, government regulates what companies can charge, so no one is left at the mercy of the profit motive when it comes to life's essentials. What's more essential than healthcare? We all need health insurance, but our government does very little to regulate the prices that insurance companies can charge consumers. That is simply wrong. The solution is to regulate health insurance prices like any other utility and stop this kind of profiteering.

The official mission of the Department of Health and Human Services is to "protect the health of all Americans and provide essential human services, especially for those who are least able to help themselves." But protecting the health of all Americans really isn't on the agenda in our corrupt political system. The same politicians in Washington who preach about the "culture of life" and "moral values" are too addicted to health care industry cash to care about people who can't afford to see a doctor.

What is on their agenda is clear: more tax breaks for the wealthy, as 18,000 Americans die each year at the hands of our profit-at-all-costs system; more billion-dollar federal contracts for Halliburton, as one in six Americans can't afford to see a doctor; and more corporate giveaways as the government cuts back programs for the truly destitute.

We do not have a government dedicated to "protecting the health of all Americans," as we are told. We have a bunch of bought-off frauds pretending to care about ordinary Americans, but really only interested in protecting the health of one thing: the insurance industry's bottom line. ■

BY BRIAN COOK

The New Slum Dwellers

It's tempting to call Mike Davis, a history professor at University of California at Irvine, a modern-day seer. His first book, *City of Quartz*, published in 1991, essentially predicted the L.A. riots, along with other, less dramatic phenomena of the '90s, such as the exploding

prison population and the rise of gated communities. "Poor, Black and Left Behind," a 2004 article he wrote for Tom-Dispatch.com after Hurricane Ivan narrowly missed New Orleans, reads eerily prescient in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Seeing as the United States has done little to address the concerns he laid out in his last book, *The Monster at Our Door*, about an avian flu epidemic, we can only hope that, this time, he's wrong.

But Davis isn't some divine prophet. He's simply an incredibly astute observer, whose analyses of the natural (and artificial) world factor in race, class, geography, ecology, history, economics, politics, literature and any other discipline that might lead to new insights.

In his most recent book, *Planet of Slums*, Davis applies this polymathic approach to the exponential increase in the number of slum dwellers in the Global South during the latter half of the 20th century. *In These Times* recently spoke to him about the book.

What compelled you to write the book?

The book is a response to the truly epochal report of the United Nations, "The Challenge of Slums," that came out three years ago. Before this report there simply wasn't the data or even the methodology to look at the condition of the urban poor worldwide. It's an enormously ambitious and important study, and I wrote an essay in response to it. The book is an expansion of that, a kind of armchair exploration of a rather vast literature

about the urban poor. I focus particularly on what are really the key questions: Is there still enough free or cheap land to sustain informal urbanization? Is there still enough economic opportunity in the informal sector—the main employer of new immigrants of the poor in the major Third World cities—to sustain the role of the informal sector? I think the answer to both is that we've come to a closing frontier of opportunity, and the book explores the consequences of that.

How many people are living in slums today?

Two years ago, the head of U.N. HABITAT [the United Nations Human Settlement Program] estimated that 1 billion people were living in slums, classically conceived as having inadequate, substandard housing and missing some essential services. A much larger number, perhaps 2 billion people, live in cities and are poor. More than a billion people, again overlapping with slum dwellers, really exist outside the formal economy and formal employment.

These developments are gigantic, and in some ways unexpected. No social theory predicted that urbanization would take this course at the end of the 20th century or on such a vast scale.

How do the slums today in the Global South differ from the 19th century slums?

The slums in St. Giles in London and in Old Town Manchester that Friedrich

Engels explored in his pioneering report, "The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844," were slums in the shadows of factories. The residents were factory workers or industrial workers.

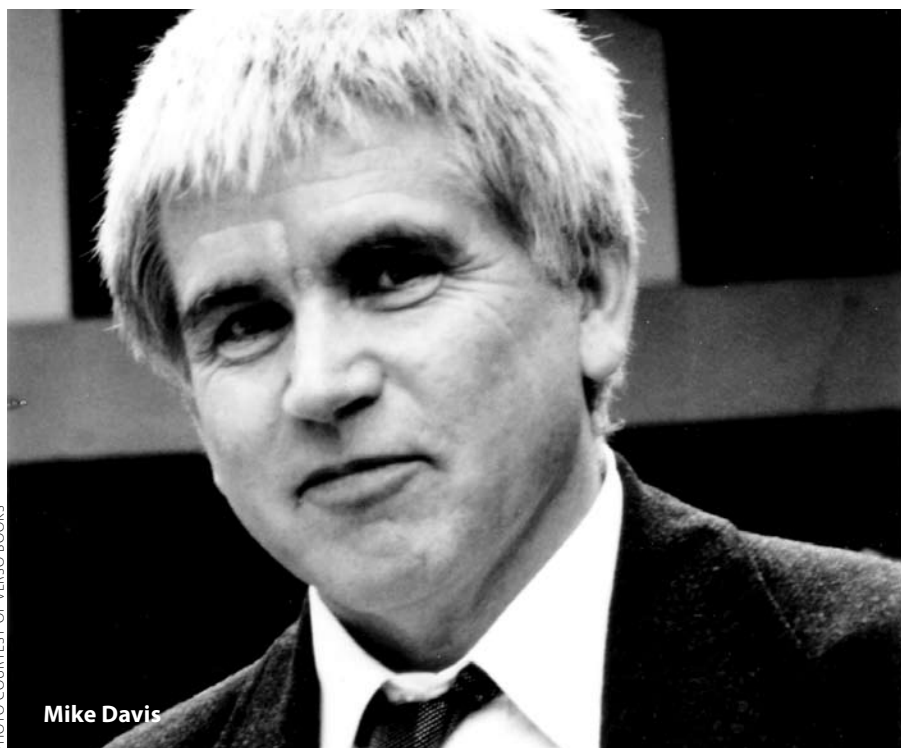
Most of the slums of today's world resemble Naples or Dublin in the 19th century—cities that grew by absorbing poor people pushed out of the countryside or who were made redundant in traditional handicraft jobs by the industrial revolution. These cities were manifestly not industrial cities. If Europe had not had the safety valve of immigration to the New World for tens of millions of people, undoubtedly you would have seen more Dublins, more Naples.

So while it would be easy to find cases where slum dwellers work in some sweatshop—making something for Wal-Mart or another multinational—slum dwelling now goes hand-in-hand with informal employment. Industrialization, except in southern China and parts of East Asia, doesn't drive city growth. Instead, there's this phenomenon of cities growing at extraordinary speeds in African countries where formal economies are shrinking or in depression. This shows that the forces pushing people into the cities, pushing them out of the countryside, are more powerful than the forces pulling them into the cities—i.e., formal urban employment.

What are the forces pushing people into the cities?

Slums grew most rapidly beginning in the late '70s and continuing through the '80s. It was the period of debt and debt-adjustment, and the cities started to grow because these policies had the most dramatic impacts on rural employment. But while these cities grew rapidly, urban investment—at least on a per capita basis—was declining dramatically under the so-called "structural adjustment programs" administered by the World Bank.

The price for countries wanting to stay



Mike Davis

in the world economy was to restrict public spending and in some cases to literally dismantle public sectors precisely when that investment was most urgently needed to meet the demands of population growth. So the question then is: How did cities actually grow if there was no public investment, no new infrastructure?

The answer: People bootstrapped urbanization through building shanties and their own infrastructures, eking out employment as domestics or street vendors or laborers. So, people begin to celebrate this miracle of informality, of informal housing and informal employment. But the literature clearly shows that that moment has now passed. There always will be exceptions, but there are far more slum communities in which new arrivals and the children of previous slum dwellers find themselves worse off, without access to free or cheap land, faced with tremendous overcrowding in these survival niches of informal employment.

This is particularly true for what researchers call the “peri-urban” slums. About a third of the slum dwellers in the Third World live in traditional inner cities, but most live on the peripheral edge in peri-urban slums: sprawling, endless slum-suburbs. They have become one of the most important sites in world politics, because it’s the social reality we know least about, where the city meets

the countryside in a hybrid and unprecedented form.

You note that the “deep thinkers” at the big think tanks have yet to grasp the geo-political implications of this.

That’s because they think too deeply in traditional paradigms. But the more empirical thinkers in the United States—the Armed Forces war planners—are very much on top of this. A large literature exists on the level of Pentagon war planning and strategic thinking. It’s very focused and precisely formulated. They’ve grasped that the biggest dilemma for America is control and domination of these peri-urban areas.

The United States can dominate any urban system that’s hierarchical and centrally organized: We can surgically take out all the crucial nodes. But what do you do when faced with an invertebrate organization of sprawling slum-peripheries? Even the indigenous administrations of these cities know very little of what goes on in the labyrinth of these shantytowns.

Surely the Pentagon’s concern also stems from the fact that the poor are automatically equated with criminals.

Of course. And it also comes out of empirical experience. First, Mogadishu in 1993 revealed that within the labyrinth of the Third World city, American mili-

tary superiority rapidly began to break down. And then, in Iraq, unexpectedly, the occupation had to deal with this problem in Sadr City and Fallujah. From these empirical adaptations then begin to come generalizations, which usually take the form that in the future we can expect to find this miscellanea of different criminal and fanatical groups.

In other words, the military doesn’t believe that there’s a single enemy—al Qaeda or something like that. They believe that there’s a single terrain that affords a huge variety of potential foes with strategic and tactical advantages, and that the chief aim of American military planning must be to find a way to overwhelm them with technology. This means first acquiring knowledge of these terrains, which we know most about from aerial and satellite photographs. This is how people study peri-urban slums these days.

Can you talk about the sequel you’re co-writing with Forrest Hylton about the resistance within these slums?

Originally, I wanted to look at the diversity of what I call “governments of the poor” that have emerged in the last generation. It’s impossible to begin with generalizations about the urban poor; you need to start with case studies and see where that goes.

Poor urban dwellers are experimenting with every possible kind of solution to their plight, from the Holy Ghost to ethnic militias, from traditional radical politics to millenarian cults. We have a new historical category of people here. To what extent they have the capacity of “historical agency”—that classical radical social theory attributed to the working class—remains to be seen.

My own hunch is that a lot of what is taken fundamentally as the “clash of civilizations” is actually transitional in form. Obviously, religious fundamentalism has taken hold with such force—in the Middle East and North Africa particularly—because of the destruction and decline of traditional Arab law. But I don’t see any reason to believe that the hegemony of fundamentalism is necessarily an eternal one. There may be a lot more fluidity here than there appears. ■

BRIAN COOK is the associate editor at *In These Times*. A longer version of this interview will appear on www.inthesetimes.com.



Housewife Annie Driver of Norfolk relaxes for a moment while looking after her children (1956).

ALEX DELEW/PICTURE POST/GETTY IMAGES

BY LAKSHMI CHAUDHRY

To Hell With Caitlin Flanagan

Caitlin Flanagan, as it turns out, is no happy housewife quietly tending to husband and child, but a “domestic diva” who delegates the actual housework to the less fortunate, leaving her free to wax eloquent about the virtues of homemaking

in lengthy essays in the *New Yorker*.

Yet the very order, harmony and meticulous attention to detail she lauds in the lost arts of housekeeping are conspicuously missing in her own seductive but intellectually sloppy prose. Her new book, *To Hell With All That: Loving and Loathing Our Inner Housewife*, reveals Flanagan as less an intellectual than a literary acrobat, who offers up contorted lines of reasoning and vertiginous leaps of logic, delivered with a fearless indifference to facts.

Every discussion of the woes of upper middle class life—sexless marriages, overscheduled children, maternal anxiety—ends with the same unlikely and wholly unsubstantiated conclusion: “What’s missing

from so many affluent American households is the one thing you can’t buy: the presence of someone who cares deeply and principally about that home and the people who live in it.” (This doesn’t seem to have stopped Flanagan from “buying” the services of a personal organizer, nanny, gardener and housekeeper to do all that deep caring on her behalf.)

Flanagan may be easy to mock, but her ideas are not as easily dismissed. She is best understood as an eloquent raconteur of a pervasive cultural narrative that recasts modern middle class life as the proverbial fall from the Eden represented by ’50s America:

...a world that seems to me now a bygone age, as remote and unrecoverable as Camelot: a world of good meals

turned out in orderly fashion; of fevers cooled without a single frantic call to the pediatrician; of clothes mended and repaired and pressed back into useful service rather than discarded to the rag heap ... [of being] assured of safety, continuity, comfort of the highest order.

A paradise that was irretrievably lost when the feminist Eve foolishly bit the forbidden apple of economic independence.

In Flanagan's writing, the '50s housewife is confident, self-effacingly generous and loving, and, above all, happy, unlike the self-absorbed, neurotic bundle of insecurities that is today's woman. Even the present-day "at-home" mother isn't immune from the pernicious effects of feminism, which has burdened her with both a contempt for housework as "drudgery" and the need to "do things for herself." (The words italicized to better convey the folly of such presumption.) So off she goes to the movies, the yoga studio, the book club to "feed herself intellectually and emotionally." If middle-class mothers are sleep-deprived, angry, exhausted, unhappy—as they undoubtedly seem in the many books and surveys—it is merely fitting punishment for their narcissism, a consequence of the foolish demand for self-fulfillment. Abandon that unreasonable desire, commands Flanagan, and ye shall find the secret to the happiness of your feminine forbears.

Attack her conception of the happy housewife as romantic and you merely confirm her view of feminism, which she accuses of "imposing a certain narrative—of boredom, of oppression, of despairing uselessness—on an entire generation of women."

The problem of maternal misery, however, lies not in the ways that the preoccupations of women today are different from those of the post-war generation, but in the ways that they are entirely the same. The source of current-day fears and insecurities can, in fact, be traced to an ideology of motherhood that is nearly a century old.

Motherhood today, as Flanagan describes it, is experienced as "an exquisitely over-wrought enterprise, full of guilt-racked, sleepless nights and overworried-about children and the never-ending sense that I'm doing too little or

too much or the wrong thing, missing the crucial moments, or somehow warping these perfect creatures." This all-consuming angst stands in contrast to the "unworried ease" and serene sense of purpose exhibited by mothers of yore—benefits, Flanagan implies, that accrue from

the birth of the nuclear suburban family. Ann Hulbert notes in *Raising America* that a White House conference report, titled "Personality in the Making," described middle-class women as "more or less dissatisfied and unsure of themselves, not certain that what they were

The 20th century has created an ideology of motherhood that tells women that they can never do enough, and everything they do can hurt their children.

their "sense of having somehow been charged with the care of others," which made them paragons of "competence, benevolence, calm authority."

Yet a quick glance at the history books proves the contrary. The primary sources of present-day maternal—and more generally, parental—anxiety can be traced back to the '20s, which witnessed the appearance of the first parenting manuals and the birth of *Parents Magazine*. In his book, *Anxious Parents: The History of Childrearing in America*, Peter Stearns charts the rise of child development experts determined to tutor parents on the scientifically correct way to raise a child. These early experts introduced two key ideas that would determine the future of parenting in America: one, children are fragile, helpless and malleable (as opposed to their hardy, self-sufficient, independent 19th-century predecessors); two, parents, especially mothers, are the single most important factor determining a child's future. Denouncing the dangers of "traditional" childrearing practices allowed these experts to establish the incompetence of "problem" parents, who could not be trusted to rear children without outside intervention.

Cultural anxiety about children sparked by the rise of a mass urban industrial society ratcheted up the demands of parenting even as traditional sources of familial support—extended families, close-knit rural communities, live-in domestic help—were rapidly disappearing. By the time Flanagan's beloved '50s rolled around, the anxiety and confusion among mothers had reached new heights, thanks to World War II and

doing is of real worth, fearful of failure in a job that is ill-defined."

The various domestic manuals that Flanagan so admiringly quotes as evidence of '50s family life were, in fact, attempts to soothe the nagging sense of ambivalence among American mothers. Far from the epitome of "unworried ease," the American mother of the '50s was, in the words of a *New York Times Magazine* article of the time, likely to be "torn between embattled forces of Discipline and Permissiveness, dazed by the potential perils of rejection, affection, early weaning, late toilet training and chronic thumb-sucking, traumatized by the fear of causing a trauma." In other words, not all that different from her 21st century counterpart.

Apart from a brief lull during the '70s, the requirements of the maternal role have merely escalated over the decades since. The large-scale entry of women into the workplace has been accompanied by a barrage of confusing, often contradictory models of parenting prompted by each new psychological or neurological "breakthrough." All of these, oddly, require ever greater vigilance and attention. A *McCall's* survey in 1984—a time when a majority of women were working—revealed that the '80s "super mom" spent nearly three times as much time as her '60s counterpart on cuddling, talking and playing with her children. By the '90s, the expert consensus advocated an intensive regimen that required continual presence and vigilance, be it in the form of attachment parenting or intensive child development techniques.

As *Perfect Madness* author Judith Warner describes it, today's mothers

must “not just [be] loving nurturers but educators, entertainers, guardians of environmental purity, protectors of a stable and prosperous future” for their children. But Warner wrongly attributes our readiness to embrace this absurdly demanding version for motherhood on the “impotent control-freakishness” of the present generation. The 20th century—with its potent mix of scientific and therapeutic advances accompanied by intense social anxiety—has created an ideology of motherhood that tells women that they can never do enough, and everything they do can hurt their children.

Flanagan’s writing is simply the latest iteration of this ideological apparatus that keeps mothers feeling insecure and inadequate. She is no different from the bullying experts who hectored the ’50s housewife into beleaguered acquiescence.

If there is a formula for domestic happiness, the first step toward it would be to challenge an oppressive discourse of parenting that curtails any clear-eyed assessment of children’s needs. As Stearns notes, the United States is unlike Europe not merely in its lack of childcare options, but also its surfeit of parental anxiety: “And it is more than greater fatigue on the American side: it is constant guilt about whether the right choices are being made, whether the children are being adequately tended.”

Over the past hundred years, American culture has increasingly placed on the frail shoulders of parents—especially mothers—the responsibility of raising children, a weighty task that for millennia has been shared by the community at large. When dramatic social change creates fears about our children, our solution is to pressure women to do more, and more, and more. The so-called “Mommy Wars” deflect attention from the real problem at hand—a punitively demanding ideology of parenting that burdens *all* mothers—and reframes it as a debate about women who work. It makes it all that much easier to ignore social arrangements that are just plain unworkable. ■

LAKSHMI CHAUDHRY is a senior editor at *In These Times*. Read more of Chaudhry’s writing on motherhood in *Maybe Baby*, a recently published collection of essays based on a popular series at *Salon.com*.



HENNY RAY ABRAMS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

FILM

Giuliani: Hero or Race Baiter?

By Steven Wishnia

RUDOLPH GIULIANI’S EIGHT years as mayor of New York bridged two political eras: the racially coded politics of the late 20th century, which targeted the “pathological” African-American poor as Public Enemy No. 1, and the post-9/11 police state, which transformed dissenters into “terrorist” suspects.

Of course, the conventional wisdom lauds Giuliani as “the man who cleaned up New York” and “the hero of 9/11.” Kevin Keating’s forthcoming documentary, *Giuliani Time*, deconstructs that legend with a mix of interviews, period news footage, and the occasional bit of Michael Moore-style humor. The film opens May 12 in New York.

The *Giuliani Time* follows Giuliani’s rise from the son of a small-time mobster to a federal prosecutor in the Reagan administration, where he gained prominence for his vindictive pursuit of mobsters and Haitian refugees. It tracks his mayoralty from the unofficial opening of his 1993 campaign, leading a mob of white cops in shouting “Bullshit” at City Hall (then occupied by David Dinkins, New York’s first black mayor), to his political collapse in 2000, when cancer and much-publicized marital

problems forced him to drop out of a Senate race against Hillary Clinton.

Crime-fighting is the cornerstone of the Giuliani legend. In 1990 and 1991, with heavily armed gangs battling for control of the crack trade, the city averaged six murders a day. Giuliani supporters such as Myron Magnet of the Manhattan Institute, his main advocate in this film, simply point to the numbers: By the time Giuliani left office, crime had dropped to the levels of the mid-’60s, with murders below three a day. But the decline of New York crime in the ’90s began under Dinkins and paralleled a nationwide decline. Did Giuliani’s policies—in particular, “quality of life” policing, prosecuting small offenses like public drinking and pot-smoking (and even reviving a Prohibition-era ban on dancing in bars!)—really bring it down in New York? William Bratton, Giuliani’s first police commissioner (who admits he never got along with the mayor) cites the use of computers to pinpoint high-crime locations—and the 6,000 new police officers hired by Dinkins.

“Quality of life” policing was actually most successful in reducing the *perception* of crime. Giuliani’s campaign against the menace of “squeegee men” epitomized this; it played to the fears of white car owners who were so terrified of being accosted by a ragged-looking black man that they wanted them all locked up.

But the racial subtext of Giuliani’s policies eventually caused his political

downfall. The 1999 police killing of Amadou Diallo, an African immigrant shot 19 times because he pulled a wallet during a police stop, cracked the mayor's invincibility. Giuliani dismissed the ensuing protests as "silly," which translated to many as callous and racist.

The other key racial-code issue of the era was welfare. Giuliani imposed a punitive mandatory-work policy, using welfare recipients to do laid-off city workers' old jobs for less than minimum wage while couching it in rhetoric about "ending dependency." The film juxtaposes black welfare recipients complaining that they need "real jobs" with footage of Giuliani welfare commissioner Jason Turner, who responds to a union leader's complaint about "slave labor" by declaring, "Work is what sets you free." (That's "Arbeit macht frei" in German, but Keating opts to cut to an old movie-comedy version of a 19th-century workhouse instead of to the more sinister inscription over the gates of Auschwitz.)

Was Giuliani a racist? Former city education commissioner Rudy Crew, one of

the few black officials in his administration, says his support of school vouchers was racist. And all three of Giuliani's mayoral races were racially polarized: He won more than two-thirds of the white vote and less than 20 percent of the black vote.

The film largely skips over two significant areas: Giuliani's policies on housing and protest suppression. The mayor expended a lot of venom on homeless people begging for quarters, but the landlords raising rents past \$1,000 a month were among his biggest supporters. He cut the city's housing-construction programs dramatically and he discreetly supported the gutting of its rent controls. The city's housing crisis has accelerated; today, homelessness is the highest it's been since the Depression, and nearly 29 percent of New York tenants spend more than half their income on rent, up from 25 percent in 2002.

Giuliani also pioneered many of the tactics against political protests that have gone national since 9/11: an overwhelming and overbearing police presence, pre-emptive arrests, and corralling

demonstrators into cattle pens. His successor, the less puritanical but more plutocratic Michael Bloomberg, has amplified those policies, denying permits for large antiwar rallies and jailing almost 2,000 people during the 2004 Republican Convention.

While the film begins and ends with images of Giuliani talking about the 9/11 attacks, it doesn't do much to dissect his image as a "hero" of 9/11—the moment of his political resurrection, and perhaps the most overrated part of the Giuliani legacy. Maybe he looked courageous next to the scared rabbit staring at *My Pet Goat*, but his most concrete response to the attacks was trying to get the 2001 mayoral election postponed, on the grounds that only he could handle the crisis.

Giuliani Time posits itself as a warning in case the former Duce of Gotham runs for president. He may be too "liberal" for the Republicans' Talibanic wing—he's spent more time schmoozing rich gay campaign donors than crusading against sodomite abominations—but if he does gain traction, be afraid. ■

[art space]



In ***Signals/Señales***, 32 contemporary Mexican artists explore the violence Mexicans struggle with daily while living on the U.S./Mexican border. The sculptures, paintings, graphic designs, and photographs visually confront the social issues and brutal realities of the border zone. To the left is "Valentine" by Elina Chauvet, a self-taught painter, who lives in Mazatlan, Mexico and is director of the Elina Chauvet Gallery. The exhibit will be on display at the Art and Cultural Center of Hollywood, Fla., through June 11. For more information visit: www.artandculturecenter.org.

Žižek's Refusal

By Adam Kotsko

WITHIN THE LAST few years, Slavoj Žižek has gained a name for himself as a political commentator. After his essay on 9/11, "Welcome to the Desert of the Real," he steadily increased his popular writing, publishing in seemingly every possible venue (including *In These Times*) in response to virtually every major news story. Meanwhile, Žižek was said to be hard at work on another long book, *The Parallax View*, which he was already claiming as his magnum opus months before its recent release.

Frankly, a magnum opus is exactly what Žižek needs right now. His performance as a public intellectual has met with decidedly mixed reviews, with much of his new audience wondering if they should take his counterintuitive and often outrageously provocative assertions seriously. At the same time, many of his long-time readers have grown impatient with Žižek's failure to produce more work of the caliber that made his academic reputation in the 1990s.

Žižek is known for his frequent use of film and pop culture, his huge range of philosophical and literary references, and his obscene jokes—all packaged in overarching metaphors involving something like a rollercoaster (or in one particularly bizarre case, a mulcher). *The Parallax View* includes all of these things: extended riffs on the *Matrix* trilogy, a section on Henry James' prose style, a Hegelian approach to sexual positions, a highly questionable analysis of anti-Semitism and a wide array of other digressions, often brilliant, sometimes plodding, with varying degrees of relevance to the topic at hand. More significantly, however, *The Parallax View* consolidates Žižek's work as a whole and decisively moves it forward.

Žižek uses "parallax" to refer to situations in which the "same thing," when viewed from two different perspectives, presents itself to the observer in two completely irreconcilable ways. A good example of this is light, which can be viewed as both a wave and a particle, with no way of mediating between the two positions. Rather than a conflict of two opposing principles, parallax names "the inherent 'tension,' gap, noncoinci-

excerpt



Reclaiming urban space for ethnic gardens

In The Earth Knows My Name: Food, Culture, and Sustainability in the Gardens of Ethnic Americans, Patricia Klindienst profiles eight ethnically-rooted gardens throughout the United States. Here, Klindienst talks with Hilda Colon of Nuestras Raíces, a Puerto Rican community farm in South Holyoke, Mass. Colon developed the women's program, known as Raíces Latina.

The girls of Raíces Latina can now imagine affecting the landscape of this urban center by turning empty lots into gardens. They have the knowledge, the skill, the desire, and now the power to affect the place where they live. The politics of urban space—the very idea of "real estate," the tension between public and private space—has been transformed for them through the simple act of learning how to plant seeds and grow their own food.

The women who are their mentors have also been profoundly changed by the discovery that gardening has the power to awaken their imagination and will. ...

"In Puerto Rico, having a garden is about growing your own food," Hilda says. "Here it's not only about food. It's your way out of your apartment if you don't have your own house. It's a stress reliever. And it's a way of screaming out, 'I want to keep my culture. I want to give this tradition to my children and leave them with this gift, this pride.' When you talk to the elders, you see the pride in their eyes."

To garden is to be drawn out of isolation. For the women, to teach girls how to garden is to reclaim an aspect of their role as esteemed elders."

dence" of reality with itself.

His ambition here is to develop a new dialectical of materialism. The philosophical idea of materialism is simple enough: no God, no souls, etc. Matter is all there is. What a specifically *dialectical* materialism adds is the idea of the conflictual and inconsistent character of matter itself, in contrast to the idea of the universe as a machine running smoothly in accordance with transparent physical laws. Žižek uses this fundamental insight into the conflictual character of existence to investigate three kinds of parallax—philosophical, scientific and political. (This division allows for, in Žižek's words, "a minimum of conceptual order.")

The philosophy section is the most loosely organized. One chapter expands on his recent work on Christianity. For Žižek, part of Christianity's "subversive core" is the idea of Christian love: "the excessive care for the beloved, a 'biased' commitment which disturbs the balance" of normal reality. The space for this love is opened up by the believer's act of "unplugging" from all social ties in order to be completely faithful to Christ. For Žižek,

St. Paul's relativization of all social roles, indicating that the believer does not "belong" to the present order, is a subversive action of refusal. It explains Žižek's interest in Christianity in the first place: This refusal to identify with the present order is a vital precursor to any attempt at revolutionary change.

The science section is the most important: No one is going to be impressed by a materialism, dialectical or not, that cannot make sense of science. Embracing cognitive and brain science—a subject many psychoanalysts have viewed with suspicion—Žižek rejects the idea that science can somehow "go too far" and destroy something essential to humanity, in this case, the idea of consciousness and free will. Rather than fretting that discovering the brain processes that underlie consciousness will somehow undermine our experience of consciousness, Žižek wants to determine what happens at the level of neuronal processes to give rise to the dimension of consciousness, and of human free agency.

To determine this, Žižek surveys a range of cognitive scientists, pointing

out inconsistencies in their accounts of how consciousness arose. Acknowledging the field's diversity, he lays out several basic positions, ranging from the idea that consciousness simply doesn't exist to the idea that consciousness cannot be explained by other forces and must be taken as an independent force analogous to gravity or magnetism. But he rejects these ideas in favor of a more materialist position. Žižek agrees with those who think consciousness emerges out of a kind of short-circuit in the neuronal circuitry. Essentially, according to cognitive scientists such as Antonio Damasio, the "mental map" of the human being's surroundings increased in complexity until it finally reached the point where there was a representation of the "self" in the map. Thus, the mind was able to think about itself, and for Žižek this reflexive move produced the unintended consequence of consciousness.

Within this scheme, conscious free choice does not directly "cause" human action in a straightforward way. Instead, free choice is first of all a negative move of refusal, because only the refusal to continue along in the chain of instinc-

tual reactions opens up space for other possibilities. Far from being the pinnacle of evolution, then, humanity becomes the ultimate anti-adaptive species, with consciousness opening the way for the expenditure of huge amounts of energy on pursuits—such as language, art, and above all, non-procreative sex—that have nothing to do with "survival of the fittest." Thus, Žižek is proposing a model of human freedom that avoids both pure mechanical determinism and the illusion of pure Promethean self-creation, where humanity creates itself by continually turning the given reality toward surprising new ends. As with his analysis of Christianity, this vision also has a political punch: We are most human when we refuse to act according to a supposed historical necessity or biological laws.

The final section on politics is probably of greatest interest to a general audience that came to Žižek through his popular articles and hope to learn of the positive program that underlies his criticism of various political movements. However, a large chunk of this section is taken up with those very same articles, including pieces on why Stalinism is to be preferred over Nazism, on Thomas Frank's *What's the Matter With Kansas?*,

etc. While these articles actually do make more sense when presented together, their inclusion contributes to an overall feeling of anti-climax. This feeling is only deepened when he advocates as a model revolutionary Herman Melville's *Bartleby*, whose constant refrain, "I would prefer not to," is the exact opposite of an inspiring political slogan.

Even here, however, Žižek is making a serious argument. As he has demonstrated throughout, negativity or refusal was at the core of both the Christian movement and the evolutionary emergence of human consciousness and culture. In both cases, what has been most valuable has stemmed from continued refusal, for example, the refusal to submit to the laws of nature by settling for the satisfaction of one's animal needs. And so Žižek's vision of revolution is one in which "an underlying 'I would prefer not to' ... forever reverberates," in which the refusal never lets up, even and especially in the building of a new positive order. If Žižek is correct that, "there is no final solution on the horizon today; Capital is here to stay; all we can hope for is a temporary truce," then perhaps the true task of those who hope for revolution is to imagine what such a thorough-going refusal might mean. ■

spin cycle

BY JESSICA CLARK AND TRACY VAN SLYKE

TxtPower

Wondering what tools progressives can use to increase political engagement in '06? Check your pocket. The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press reports that 66 percent of American adults now have cell phones, and 32 percent of those between 18 and 29 say they "couldn't live" without them.

According to MobileActive.org, a group that tracks cell-phone activism around the globe, "Mobile phones have emerged as a campaign organizing tool across traditional socio-economic and cultural boundaries." Callers have used text-messaging to sign petitions, coordinate

seemingly spontaneous gatherings (known as "smart-mobs") and engage in citizen journalism. In San Francisco, Mobilevoter.org is working with the Chinese American Voter Education Committee to launch a cell-phone assisted voter registration drive, and FrontlineSMS.com helps NGOs reach out to targeted communities in developing countries. Check out the Mobile Messaging Awards at 160characters.org in late May for a glimpse at emerging text message applications.

Our So-Called News

Just when you thought television news couldn't get any worse, information has surfaced that there's a good chance you haven't been

watching the news at all.

The Center for Media and Democracy has identified 77 television newsrooms over a ten-month period that have broadcast Video News Releases (VNRs) produced by such corporate types as General Motors, Intel, Pfizer and Capital One—without disclosure to the viewers.

According to the group's report, "In each case, these 77 television stations actively disguised the sponsored content to make it appear to be their own reporting. In almost all cases, stations failed to balance the clients' messages with independently-gathered footage or basic journalistic research."

Combined, these 77 televi-

sion stations reach more than half the U.S. population.

In an effort to clamp down on fake news, the media reform organization Free Press has started an online petition to demand that the Federal Communications Commission strengthen disclosure requirements and penalize news outlets that violates such regulations. To sign the petition, go to <http://action.freepress.net/campaign/fakenews>. To read the full report, go to <http://www.prwatch.org/fakenews/ex-ecsummary>.

BY TERRY J. ALLEN

Reach Out and Track Someone



IF YOU ARE one of the more than 200 million Americans with a cell phone nestled in your pocket, authorities may be able to find you any time day or night—even if you never make or receive a call.

You know the Verizon ad where a lockstep crowd personifies the network that accompanies its customer everywhere? Well, within that seemingly friendly horde, a high-tech Big Brother is lurking.

Most people know that when they make a mobile call—during a 911 emergency, for example—authorities can access phone company technology to pin down their location, sometimes to within a few feet.

A lesser-known fact: Cell phone companies can locate you any time you are in range of a tower and your phone is on. Cell phones are designed to work either with global positioning satellites or through “pings” that allow towers to triangulate and pinpoint signals. Any time your phone “sees” a tower, it pings it.

That is what happened last month when a New York City murder highlighted the existence of the built-in capability of phones to locate people even when they aren’t making calls.

The case of Imette St. Guillen captivated the New York City media as only the murder of a young, attractive, middle-class, white female can. One piece of evidence leading to the arrest of Darryl Littlejohn, the bouncer at the club where St. Guillen was last seen, was what police called “cell phone records.” In fact, it was not an actual call that placed Littlejohn at the crime scene. Instead, according to the *New York Daily News*, police traced Littlejohn’s route the day of the murder by tracking the “pings” of his cell

phone, which were “stored” in a tower and “later retrieved from T-Mobile by cops.”

Telecom companies and government are not eager to advertise that tracking capability. Nor will companies admit whether they are archiving the breadcrumb trail of pings from a cell phone so that they—or authorities—can trace back, after the fact, where the customer had been at a particular time. “Of course, there is that capability,” says Bruce Schneier, chief technical officer with Counterpane Internet Security. “Verizon and the other companies have access to that information and the odds are zero that they wouldn’t sell it if it is legal and profitable. This is capitalism after all.”

But legality can be so tricky to pin down, especially when national security and corporate profits are involved. Communications companies and government have been repeatedly caught collaborating in highly questionable practices. Warrantless wiretapping, now sparking cries for Bush’s impeachment, was implemented by the NSA accessing the “gateway” switches that route calls around the globe. Most of these switches are controlled by AT&T, MCI and Sprint.

Recently, the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) said it had internal AT&T documents and a sworn statement by retired AT&T technician Mark Klein showing that the company’s use of a “dragnet surveillance” was “diverting Internet traffic into the hands of the NSA wholesale.”

It is likely that authorities are also accessing cell phone call records and conducting real-time tracing of hapless Palestinians who donated to clinics and liberal activists who dared march for peace. And if the administration’s record is a guide, it is interpreting privacy protection laws relating to cell phones in ways that bend and perhaps batter the Constitution.

“I think there’s a substantial worry that location information about cell phone users is being released without a court order,” EFF Staff attorney Kevin Bankston told CNN.

Echoing the Bush administration’s rationale for warrantless wiretapping, the Justice Department argues that time lost justifying a search warrant can mean dangerous delays. Several judges around the country have disagreed. Citing officials’ failure to show probable cause, they have denied government requests for cell phone tracking. According to EFF, a New York magistrate revealed that “the Justice Department had routinely been using a baseless legal argument to get secret authorizations from a number of courts, probably for many years.”

“Justice Department officials countered that courts around the country have granted many such orders in the past without requiring probable cause,” the Oct. 28 *Washington Post* reported.

Real-time tracking technology also opens disturbing entrepreneurial opportunities. Anyone who provides their kids, spouse or employees with a software-readied cell phone can secretly monitor them on the web. Whereify.com “locates loved ones within feet/meters in about a minute,” and allows subscribers to “view location on both street and aerial mapping, to include date/time stamp, lat/long and block address” and “set breadcrumb schedule for periodic locates.” Another Internet business promises to sell you the calling records for any phone number you provide. (Note to readers: If you have Karl Rove’s number, I’ll cough up the \$100 fee to get a look.)


But as far as invasiveness goes, the ability of the government to secretly track and find you anywhere, anytime, ranks right up with a pelvic exam in Times Square. ■

Contact Terry J. Allen: tallen@igc.org

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Disclaimer

Continued from backpage

fied ourselves in full mariachi regalia to protest immigration policy (*The Crucifixion Project*, 1994). I became good at organizing ephemeral communities of like-minded rebel artists. I advised activists on how to use performance art strategies to enhance their political actions. I used the art world as a base of operations.

In 20 years of touring the United States as a “radical” performance artist, I have come across innumerable situations in which the content of my “politically direct,” “racially sensitive” and “sexually explicit” material had to be “adapted” and “translated” to the site. Because of this, according to a curator friend of mine, I am “no virgin in the house of censorship.”

Since 9/11, however, my collaborators and I are facing an entirely new dilemma: prohibition—both overtly imposed and internalized. My agent, Nola Maria-no, recently told me in a letter:

Besides the ideological censorship exercised by the Bush administration, I believe that we have entered a new era of psychological censorship, one that is sustainable as we, our collaborators, and allies find ourselves second-guessing our audience responses, fearing for our jobs, and unsure of our boards’ support. Unable to quickly identify the opposition, we find ourselves shadow-boxing with our conscience and censoring ourselves. This is a victory for a repressive political administration. One not won but rather handed to them.

THE IMPOSED CULTURE of panic, prohibition and high security permeating every corner of society—including our arts organizations—has created an incendiary environment for the production of critical culture. We are being offered budgets that are half what we used to work with in the pre-Bush era. As a result, we can only present small-scale projects in the United States, and under technically primitive conditions. These new conditions are similar to those we face in Latin America, but without the community spirit and the humane envi-

ronment we find there—without people’s willingness to be always present and donate their time and skills.

So far, what has saved La Pocha Nostra from closing our doors is international touring. Sixty percent of our budget now comes from other countries.

As if this weren’t enough, due to “security restrictions,” our props, costumes and art materials are carefully scrutinized at every airport we enter. Homeland Security officers are now even checking the titles of our books and opening our notebooks and phone agendas, both when we leave and when we return to the United States. Frequently our materials are confiscated. Once, our trunk of props was confiscated by security at Boston’s Logan Airport, held for two days, and then delivered to us a half-hour before opening night—with no explanation. Not surprisingly, all the “weird”-looking props were missing, courtesy of Homeland Security. Should we change the nature of our props and art materials, and the way we dress? My colleagues and I are already doing

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this. Isn't this a form of censorship?

IN THIS RAREFIED atmosphere of paranoia, distrust and scrutiny, performance artists have come to signify "potential trouble" for U.S. art institutions. We are invited with provisos, interrogated in advance by curators. It's a new American art rite.

The cultural institution decides to go ahead with the project, but still has apprehensions. We are taken to a nice art bar and, after a few drinks—bless his/her heart—the curator or presenter takes a deep breath and starts the euphemistic interrogation:

Is this performance "audience-friendly"? (*A euphemism for art without venom or sharp edges.*) Anything we should be worried about? Frontal nudity? Violence and sex? (*The deadly combo.*) Bloodletting? Exposure to bodily fluids? Will your performers touch any audience member inappropriately? Will you force any audience member to do anything that might be considered humiliating or offensive? Any profanity? Any disrespect for religious imagery? Will there be flag desecration? Will you be making fun of the Troops?

We try to be as specific as we can in terms of describing the images and performance rituals in our piece. We then try to negotiate, case by case, image by image, the inclusion/exclusion of the most sensitive material. It's tough; if we give in too much, then the project becomes defanged, decaffeinated. But if we don't pay attention to their fears and just go ahead and do whatever we want, we will immediately be blacklisted in their circuit. It's like performing in '70s provincial Mexico.

The problem is that the fears of the presenters are well-founded; their moral dilemmas are real. Their institutions, whether mainstream or "alternative" (does anyone know what "alternative" even means nowadays?), are rapidly losing their funding. The media is not as willing to defend art as it used to be, and the newly empowered "faith-based organizations" are looking for blood: An art scandal calls down the wrath of God. Then, both the institution and the artists are attacked with hate mail and picketed by zombies. We might even be added to one of the many lists of "cultural traitors," featured on sites such as www.probusht.com/traitor or www.americantraitor.us.

And we might be vetted by groups like the New York Regional Association of Grantmakers, which warns on its Web site:

In accordance with Executive Order 13224, the USA Patriot Act and other related laws, including voluntary guidelines issued by

The media is not as willing to defend art as it used to be, and the newly empowered "faith-based organizations" are looking for blood: An art scandal calls down the wrath of God.

the Treasury Department, grantmakers regularly check the names of their prospective grantees against various watch lists produced by the government, and document their compliance to protect themselves from possible criminal and civil prosecution.

Let's face it, overt censorship is happening throughout the United States, and not just in "red America." My performance art colleagues and fellow spoken-word poets are being monitored, interrogated, defunded, watered down, ignored, and un/disinvited by our cultural institutions, many of which perceive themselves as "liberal." It's a major dilemma for critical culture in the United States, and at the same time it's an international embarrassment. The whole world knows about it because it's not happening anywhere else, not even in Catholic Latin America.

The United States is no longer "the land of opportunity" it once was, or the "most advanced democracy" it claims to be. It is now the land of censorship, isolationism, xenophobia and Puritanism; one of the most parochial places on earth; and the only Christian democracy left in the continuously shrinking "free world" it claims to lead.

Our political class is obsessed with closing our borders and keeping outsiders from entering. Since 9/11, the INS has denied La Pocha Nostra five visas to bring Mexican, Cuban and Colombian artists to the United States to work with us. In this sense, the border has become another form of censorship, and cultural exchange is now a nostalgic project of the late 20th century.

ONE OF THE chilling by-products of censorship is that eventually artists begin to accept it as inevitable—*normal*, even. One of our performance projects, *Mapa Corpo* (2004), was rejected by a dozen U.S. museums and universities when they learned the

nature of the central image: a nude body covered with 40 acupuncture needles, each bearing a small flag of one of the "coalition forces." Audience members were invited "to decolonize the body/map of the performer" by extracting a needle/flag. After so many rejections (some explicit, others euphemistic, such as those citing "health concerns") we decided to just perform the piece in other countries, such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Mexico and Brazil.

The question for us performance artists is: How much are we willing to accept?

We can delete certain texts, erase entire scenes, tone down our "outrageous behavior," and eventually, when we least expect it, we will have lost our voices and our souls. If we choose to comply over and over again, eventually a tiny crystal (our dignity?) will shatter inside our chests. We will carry the pain silently wherever we go, and it will worsen each time we face yet another warning or humiliating interrogation. One day we will wake to find we have become broken humans, without even realizing it. ■

An expanded version of "Disclaimer" appeared in the March 2006 issue of The Drama Review.

GUILLERMO GÓMEZ-PEÑA is a performance artist and writer based in San Francisco, where he directs the interdisciplinary arts troupe La Pocha Nostra. His latest book is *Ethno-Techno: Writings in Performance, Pedagogy and Activism*. Information on his current art projects can be found on his Web site: www.pochanostra.com.

Guillermo Gómez-Peña
"La Piedad Post-
colonial" from the
series, Post-México
en Xpaña, 2005



BY GUILLERMO GÓMEZ-PEÑA

IMER **DISCLAIMER** DISC

PEOPLE ASK ME ALL the time: Is La Pocha Nostra (my performance troupe) being censored in the USA? Tired of silence and diplomacy, with my heart aching and my political consciousness swelling, I now choose to speak.

As a child in Mexico, I heard adults whispering about blacklists and those who named names. My older brother, Carlos, was involved in the 1968 *movimiento estudiantil*, and several of his friends disappeared for good. During my formative years in Latin America, censorship was indistinguishable from political repression and often resulted in the imprisonment, displacement, exile or death of "dissident" intellectuals and artists.

In the '70s, many Latin American artists ended up migrating to the United States and Europe, in search of the freedom we couldn't find in our homelands. When I moved to Cali-

fornia in 1978, I found a very different situation. Artists and intellectuals simply didn't matter. The media treated our art as either an exotic new trend or a human-interest story, and the political class didn't pay attention to us, which gave us the illusion of freedom. As artists, we rejoiced in our mythical condition of liberty, our celebrated "American freedom."

I developed a reputation as an iconoclast by engaging in symbolic acts of transgression that explored and exposed sources of racism and nationalism. Coco Fusco and I exhibited ourselves inside a gilded cage, dressed as fictitious "Indians," to protest the quincentennial celebrations of Columbus' arrival in the Western hemisphere (*Two Undiscovered Americans Visit ...*, 1992-93). Roberto Sifuentes and I cruci-

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 46